

# SPIN!

**Special Issue**

## **GUEST EDITOR SPIKE LEE**

**EDDIE MURPHY**

**LIVING COLOUR**

**2 LIVE DOO-DOO**

**BAD BRAINS**

**CHUCK D: FEAR OF A BLACK PEN**

**AUGUST WILSON**

**MARION BARRY AND**

**THE MIAMI DRUG CONNECTION**

**REV. AL SHARPTON**



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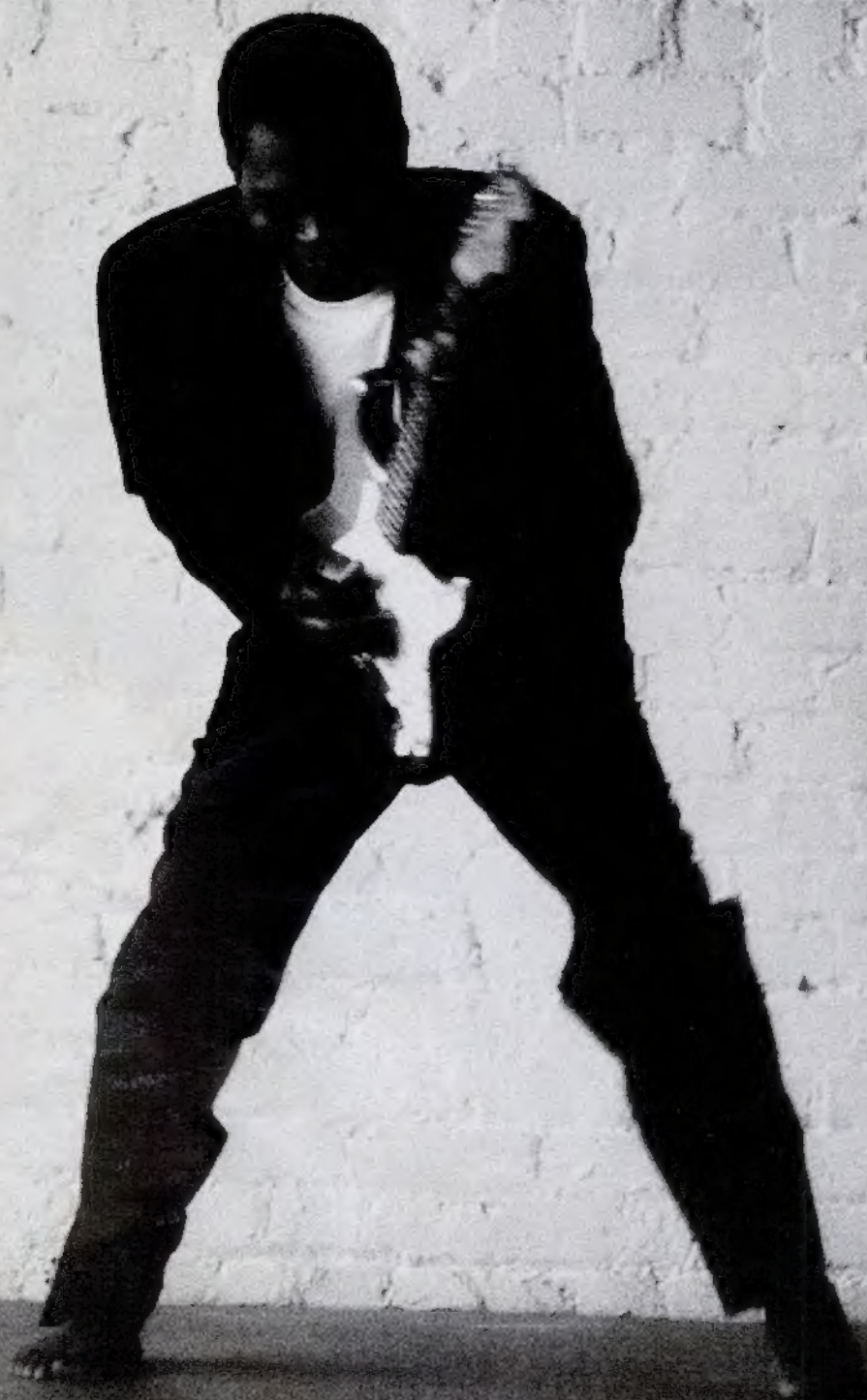
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## Volume Six, Number Seven

October 1990

**TOPSPIN** By Spike Lee, Guest Editor 8

**POINT BLANK/Letters** 10

### FLASH

Bel Biv DeVoe, Staff Selections, Hispanic Rap, Dear Elvis, Branford Marsalis, Radio Graffiti on Eric B. & Rakim, Comics, Jazzie in Japan, Caron Wheeler, New Music Seminar Riot, The Man to Beat Jesse Helms, Ice Cube's Misogyny, Homophobic House, Frankie Crocker, Racist Cops, Doug E. Doug. 14

### EDDIE!

Spike and Eddie Murphy haven't always seen eye-to-eye, but they sat eyeball-to-eyeball for this exclusive and provocative interview and discussed brothers *doin' it for themselves*. 32

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO REVEREND AL

The Reverend Al Sharpton has a lot to talk about: Bensonhurst, politics, the Movement, being indicted and acquitted, jail, and, of course, Tawana. Interview by Spike Lee. 38

### THE NEW BLACK CINEMA

A number of talented black filmmakers are exploring their racial identity and culture while liberating black cinema from its "genre" status. By Donald Bogle. 45

Cover and above photos by Gordon Parks.

### LIVING COLOURED AND PROUD

With the release of *Time's Up*, Living Colour continue to claim their rightful place in the history of rock. By Lisa Jones. 48

### LIVING FOR THE CITY

A modern-day morality tale in which a big-city mayor, Marion S. Barry, discovers that where politics is concerned, growing up black may be more of a liability than smoking crack. By Jefferson Morley. 55

### FASHION

**B-Boys**. Taking it to the streets. By Scott Paulson Bryant. Plus: Spike Lee's All-Star B-Boy Caps. 58

### 2 LIVE DOO-DOO

2 Live Crew's sexist lyrics are almost as bad as censoring them would be. By Martha Frankel. 62

### BRAIN POWER

The Bad Brains have a bright future—if they can stay together. By Vernon Reid. 65

### ANTIHERO

**Black II Black**. Public Enemy lay down the race issue in black-and-white. By Chuck D and Harry Allen. 67

**I Don't Want to Hire Nobody Just 'Cause They're Black**. A Pulitzer Prizewinning playwright explains to Hollywood what he thinks they should already know. By August Wilson. 70

### AIDS

The communities being hit hardest by AIDS are those least equipped to cope. A report from Harlem. By Celia Farber. 73

### JOIE DE LEE

Two can play this game. Spike's talented sister proves that they have more in common than their name. By Veronica Webb. 77

### SPINS/Records

Deee-Lite, Living Colour, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Shinehead, *Blues in the Mississippi Night*, The Neville Brothers, The Time, 24-7 Spyz, KRS-ONE, Joan Armatrading, Eric B. & Rakim, The Winans, Sarah Vaughan. 79

**WORLDBEAT!** More new African sounds. 88

**INDIES/CLASSIFIEDS** 100

### THE PERILS OF GUESTING

How'd you like your 747 guest-landed by Diana Ross? By Dean Christopher. 104

EDDIE!, page 32.



This One



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# BACK TO THE NEW SCHOOL



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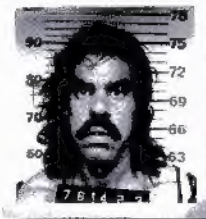
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# TOP SPIN

I was only vaguely familiar with SPIN magazine: I had seen it around and on occasion would pick up a copy to read; no more, no less. Bob Guccione, Jr., called me one day early this summer to ask me to be the guest editor of the October issue. I asked for "full control"; Bob said, "Yes, it's your magazine." We shook hands and I told him it would be the Blackest issue they've ever had. As I look at the lineup, not only is it the Blackest issue (which wasn't very hard to do) but, I might add, it may be one of their best.

This was a great opportunity and I couldn't turn it down. One good thing that has already resulted from this project is that the SPIN editorial staff has been introduced to a wealth of African-American talent: writers, journalists, artists, and photographers; people whose work they've never seen and probably never heard of. This isn't the case anymore. And, Bob says he's gonna hire them again in the near future (at least that's what he told me). And, as August Wilson put it so elegantly in his essay in this issue, they'll work because they're *black* and *talented*.

When we started to put this issue together, Nelson Mandela was on his tour crisscrossing these United States of America. And it's in his spirit that this issue was conceived. I had the pleasure of running around New York with Mandela for three days. It's one of the highlights of my life. I've always heard about Citibank's involvement in South Africa, but it wasn't until Mandela visited here that got me off my ass to do some research and find that Citibank is one of the worst offenders among American banks. I checked it out with TransAfrica and The Africa Fund, two organizations that monitor U.S. business in South Africa. Now I don't pretend to be a Rockefeller, but the money I do have I pulled out of Citibank (as did my staff); it was enough for several vice presidents to write me to reconsider. This is where we can change stuff, have a direct influence. African-Americans have enormous economic clout, if we could only consolidate it and utilize it effectively. My money is a small gesture

but it hurt Citibank. Let me add, the budget money for *School Daze*, 6.5 million dollars, *Do The Right Thing*, 6.5 million dollars, and *Mo' Better Blues*, 10 million dollars, was also deposited in Citibank; they're now crying about the 14 million they want to be getting from my upcoming film, *Jungle Fever*. It's also in my contract that my films cannot be distributed in South Africa as long as apartheid exists. And, please: Don't be fooled by the release of Mandela from prison; he still cannot vote, he is still *not* FREE.

The following is a list of some of the biggest U.S. companies still doing business in South Africa:

## THE DIRTY THIRTY (in alphabetical order)

American Cyanamid Co.; Citibank; Colgate-Palmolive Co.; Eli Lilly and Company; IBM Corp.; International Paper Co.; ITT Corp.; Johnson & Johnson Co.; Kellogg Co.; Manufacturers Hanover Corp.; MCA Entertainment Group; McDonnell Douglas Corp.; MGM/UA Communications; Michelin Corp.; Monsanto Corp.; Morgan Stanley & Co.; Motorola Inc.; NCR Corp.; Nestlé; News Corp., Ltd.; Pan Am Corp.; The Reader's Digest Assoc.; Reynolds & Reynolds Inc.; Strategic Minerals Corp.; Texaco/Caltex Petroleum Corp.; The 3M Company; Time Warner Inc.; Union Carbide Corp.; Westinghouse Electric Corp.; Xerox Corp.

This sample list is based on the draft of the 1990 edition of the *United List of United States Companies Doing Business in South Africa* by Richard Knight, published by The Africa Fund, 198 Broadway N.Y. N.Y. 10038; (212) 962-1210.

In closing, this issue for me is a celebration of African-American culture, and like Black History Month, I'm sorry it's only one month out of the year. Maybe, just maybe because of this issue, somebody black will get the initiative and capital to start a monthly national publication like this. But wait a minute, what would happen if I call Eddie, who in turn would call Cosby



An admiring crowd welcomes Nelson Mandela to Harlem during his visit to the United States.



Living Colour, page 48.

who calls Oprah, Prince, Mike Tyson, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, Michael Jordan, Barry Gordy, Bo Jackson, Magic, Isiah, Stevie Wonder, Patrick Ewing, Whoopie, Quincy, Arsenio, Wynton, Branford, and all the other black entrepreneurs? We all have the money and resources to start and own our magazines, banks, professional sports franchises, radio and TV stations, stores, schools, and other businesses. I think this is the most important move in the '90s that African-

Americans can make.

Let's start relying more on ourselves and do more for ourselves—and that means coming together, sitting down, putting aside our petty differences, and doing what we need to do for the benefit of our people.

Peace,

Spike Lee  
Brooklyn, New York

DAVID LEE

RENE ANSO





**ABSOLUT MANHATTAN.**



# POINT LETTERS BLANK

EDITED BY  
NATHANIEL WICE

## What A Brother Knows

Dear Legs,

I was visiting my favorite hideaway in the mountains of Colorado, safe and sane from the ravages of the rest of the world. When a friend and I came across the latest edition of SPIN, "Anything good in this issue?" I asked my friend who caters to reclusives. "Yeah," he answered back knowingly. "Check out the editorial your brother wrote." So I did.

What a trip down memory lane. I'd almost forgotten how much fun growing up was, or better yet, did I really want to remember. But alas, truth is stranger than fiction. I saw my early childhood flash before my eyes. I had very effectively put out of my mind that my grandmother was in an insane asylum for the first 20 years of my life and we used to visit "Grammie" every Sunday, religiously, from Day One. One thing you forgot about were the bearded ladies. We'd never seen anyone with a beard, let alone a lady, until we went to Middletown. It was better than going to the circus, but eventually got old when you "had to."

And Uncle Bill, the pack rat who lived by the furnace. The original "John the Baptist" for our generation. It's hard to believe he was a technical writer for the Apollo space projects. It brings back memories of spending a summer with you and him in Mexico, but that's an editorial unto itself.

And Carl. Yeah, he was our grammar school custodian come to think of it. Boy, that's taking me back. He was a millionaire who pissed all his money away. Too bad Mom met him when he was broke.

I guess I wrote this cuz I wouldn't have believed the editorial if I hadn't been there. This was the original generation of lost souls.

Maybe we despised the things we didn't like so we'd be sure not to turn out like them.

We didn't, did we?

Your brother,  
Craig  
Lakewood, Colorado

## Return to Sender

I would appreciate it if you would discontinue sending your magazine to my office immediately.

Steve Mathews  
Logos. The Christian Alternative  
[magazine]  
Clayton, Ohio

I will not be renewing my subscription because the ad for research papers, "Term Paper Hotline," that you carry appears to be an effort to aid students in committing academic fraud. For the life of me I cannot reconcile this way of seeing things with what's an attempt to encourage young people not to think. I am not under the influence of Jesse Helms or the Moral Majority or anyone else, as far as I know, just think that ad is indefensible and therefore I cannot support your publication.

Robert S. Simril

P.S. Your *Antihero* stories were great.

## Guitar God Heresies

You claim that making a pact with the devil is the surest way to attain guitar godhood. So why didn't Lee Atwater's name appear on the list?

John Powers  
Ridgefield, Connecticut

It is obvious to me that your "Guitar Gods" list was not compiled by actual guitar players—but by pencil-pushing yuppies. For how could SPIN overlook the obvious choices, i.e. Gary Moore, Robert Fripp, Steve Howe, and the most sacrilegious of your omissions—the late Randy Rhoads!

Are you out of your minds?

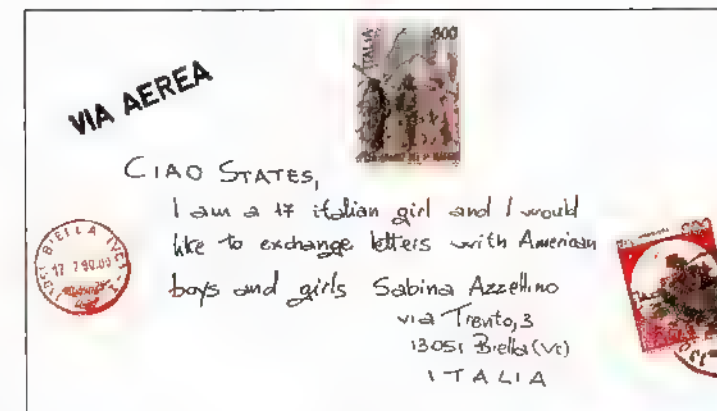
Liz Sobel  
Columbus, Ohio

Editor's note: Yes.

## Art for Aesthetics's Sake

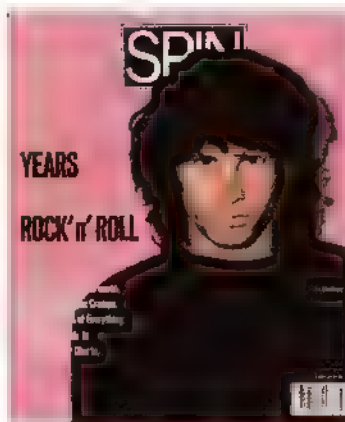
Being a public school teacher, I find Mr. Owen's comments on Morrissey and the future of the 1990s disturbing [Sing es, July '90]. In trying to remain ever-so-hopeful, Frank Owen has jumped onto the latest anti-Morrissey bandwagon. My God, Mr. Owen, do you desire a society where art is boring? Do you want kids who don't even recognize irony? (I already see them.)

Morrissey certainly doesn't have to worry about his reputation because honesty never has to be apologized for. After the "Ecstasy" has worn off (promoting



drugs, Frank?) and the DJ's get tired of being sued for ripping off artists, there will be youth—both black and white—laughing at the irony of Wilde and tossing away the MID's for guitars.

Charles H. Foster  
Marietta, Georgia



## An American Poet

The feeling I get looking at Jim Morrison strikes me as incredible. The man is more alive than I am. His face shouts vitality. I'm not a regular reader of SPIN but I thought I'd thank you for your Morrison issue [August '90].

A 24-year-old who listens to music of the same age.

Christine LeFranc  
San Jose, California

## Choose Life

It's kind of ironic while die-hard Depeche Mode fan Kelly Jaffray "might sacrifice [her] life for the sake of the group," she "wouldn't just sleep with them" or "they couldn't force [her] to take drugs" ["Pop A La Mode," July '90].

Call me weird, but I'd probably get a lot more pleasure sleeping or smoking up

with them than I would killing myself.

Sandra Sperounes  
Edmonton, Canada

## Target Marketing

I have been a regular reader of SPIN for about a year now, but have only recently, as of the August 1990 issue, become an official subscriber.

I know it's my fault and my mistake that I didn't subscribe to your magazine when the T-shirt offer was still alive, but I still thought it would be worth a try to see if there were any possible way you could dig up one of those shirts and send it to me now.

Along with being very hip items of clothing, these SPIN T-shirts also act as a great medium for free advertising for your publication. I am 6'2", 205 lbs. and live in Washington, D.C. I'm advertising space in terms of size of the ad and exposure to the most people.

My size is XL.

Pete Finney  
Arlington, Virginia

Editor's note: You win. But only you.

## Correction

The Zappa/Havel meeting was in English, not through an interpreter ("Meeting of the Minds," August '90). It went like this:

Havel: I like your music. Especially the old records with the Mothers of Invention and that record you did with Captain Beefheart...

Zappa: "Bongo Fury."

Havel: Yes, "Bongo Fury."

Havel goes on to say that it has not been easy to hear Zappa music in Czechoslovakia over the last 20 years.

Address letters to the editor to: Point Blank, SPIN, 6 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. Please include your phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



PHOTO MATT D'S-EA



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# FLASH

EDITED BY FRANK OWEN





# REVOLUTIONARY GENERATION



Bell Biv DeVoe, from left: Ronnie DeVoe, Michael Bell, and Mickey Bivins.

What happens when

former toy boys

turned-homeboys,

Bell Biv DeVoe meet

some revolutionary

sisters who think

B-boys can't be

boys forever?

Three ex-members of the teen-dream group New Edition, who are now the platinum-selling Bell Biv DeVoe, are eating at a Manhattan soul-food restaurant when an apparent fan letter from three young women sitting nearby is sent to their table. A few years ago such a letter would have closed with "All my love, Dawn," amid clouds of jittery hearts. This year it's signed "From some Revolutionary Sisters who want to see a total change in the hell we are living in."

The women are complaining about the group's first hit, "Poison." They write, "Lyrics like 'clockin' the hos' and 'We know she's a loser 'cause me and the crew used to do her' not only uphold but actually encourage the systematic oppression and brutalization of women in this society. Remember, if you're dissing the sisters, you ain't fighting the power."

The three young men read the letter, barely blink, and continue to eat their chicken. Ho, ho, ho! About women? Shift. This is about homeboys.

After conquering the stigma of adolescent idoldom—the realm of pimples and dimples—Bell Biv DeVoe are now high on the rebellious thrill of talking dirty, trashing New Edition's Mr. Clean image for some freak stuff, finally getting a grain of respect on the basketball court.

"We weren't calling those girls poison; we're calling bad girls poison," says Michael Bivins. "This time we chose not to bite our tongues. This is us, we're just speaking words that we hear everyday."

"Our new single is gonna stir up some trouble," says Ronnie DeVoe, the lean, doe-eyed darling of the group. All three dive with relish into the controversial line from "Do Me!," singing in perfect unison, "Ooh, that booty, smack it, flip it, rub it down."

"It's a little love tap. It's not, 'Whip her, tie her up in chains.' We're not sick," says lead singer Ricky Bell.

Says Bivins with a smirk, "I hear Madonna said she likes to be spanked."

The offended women have been craning their necks, following their letter and waiting for a response, but they realize it's hopeless. The three singers are finished eating. Bell asks the waiter to wrap up the leftover chicken from his plate and my plate. It must be a holdover from growing up in Boston's Roxbury projects, from which Maurice Starr plucked them to form New Edition.

Before they leave I ask them about their former mentor and manager's latest creation, New Kids On The Block. "New kids on what block?" Bell asks sarcastically.

Jill Pearlman



# HEAVY ROTATION



## Staff Selections

**Black Box** *Dreamland* (Deconstruction) Ah, sional and phoney, the single "Ride on Time" is front c itato-disco delirium at its best. The rest of the album is muted in comparison, but some good attempts at imitating that gospel-inspired full-bodied garage sound make this a surprisingly consistent debut. (Owen)

**The Afros** *Kickin' Afrolicious* (JML) What might appear at first look to be a novelty act performing what might appear at first listen to be generic rap with no particular direction turns out to be exactly that. But a unique "Afrolicious" sense of humor redeems this debut, turning it into a fun way to waste time. Break out the pick combs. (Blackwell)

**The Strawberry Zots** *Cars, Flowers, Telephones* (RCA/BMG) Snappy, crackly, poppy debut from an Albuquerque, New Mex.co, band with a wicked sense of humor. Hints of the Three O'Clock and the Fleshtones blend together to create a flowery flashback to '60s psychedelia without the tedious trappings of the average "revival" record. As far as subject matter goes, the title just about says it all. (Blackwell)

**Yo La Tengo** *Fakebook* (Restless/Bar None) This largely acoustic collection of mostly covers (Flamin' Groovies, Daniel Johnston, Kinks) is wholly wonderful. Devoid of the feedback-drenched workouts you've grown to love, *Fakebook* concentrates instead on the virtues of boy-girl vocal harmony, pedal steel guitar (courtesy Dave Schramm of the Schramms), and songcraft. That's a lot of virtues. (Greer)

**The Boredoms** *Soul Discharge* (Shimmy-Disc) From Japan, with love, comes the newest contender for the title of No. 5 Best Band in the World. An acid rain of unearthly screams, hammering percussion, and gunshots punctuates the sheets of guitar in random fashion. It sounds big, it sounds bold, it sounds good. Plus they dress funny. (Greer)

**Living Colour** *Time's Up* (Epic) Kicks in with a vengeance, carrying on the Living Colour tradition of metal with a message, complete with political soundbites woven throughout. Vernon Reid proves again that he is the master of the sizzling guitar lead. Head-banging, head-expanding music with no parave. (Spencer)

# SPANISH FLY

From the parks to the charts, from the barrio to Billboard, Spanish rap is hitting hard with talents such as Mellow Man Ace, Kid Frost, and Latin Empire.

When Mellow Man Ace's "Mentiroso" went gold this past summer, Hispanic rap proved its mainstream pull. Around the same time, another Spanglish hip hop record from East L.A., Kid Frost's "Hispanic Causing Panic," became a recognizable fixture booming out of bass cabinets in the back of Ninety-Eights and Audis from Compton to Strong Island. And since back in the days, Ricardo aka Puerto Rock and Anthony "MC KT" of New York's Latin Empire have been kicking up shit in a Spanglish salsa-fied style, at first at parks and parties, and now on a new record, "Asi Es La Vida" (that's life). "Our music has shot from the barrio to Billboard," Kid Frost says. "You've heard it in English, now here's a Spanish lesson."

Rap has generally been represented in the mass media as a strictly African-American art form. In fact, Hispanics have been a seminal influence in rap, as witnessed by the many Hispanic personalities associated with the roots of hip hop in the Bronx. There was Charlie Chase, Ruby Dee, and Prince Whiple Whip, and even an early Spanish rap, Mean Machine's "Disco Dream." "When it began in the South Bronx, we were there," says Puerto Rock. "On every street corner where we lived it was there."

The new wave of Spanglish rappers is out to reclaim Hispanic culture's influence on hip hop and to affirm its validity today. To this end they've come up with a distinct genre which blends a sultry, laid-back vocal style with slamming backbeats and a host of tropical influences.



DENNIS REELEY

Kid Frost, above, and Mellow Man Ace, right: leaders of the Spanglish Rap Revolution.



ARNOLD TURNER

"These days," says Mellow Man Ace, "Spanglish rap is broadening the meaning of rap. When I do Hispanic jams I can use old hip hop breaks, or Santana, or a Cuban dance band record from the 1950s. Even people like BDP and Queen Latifah have sampled Latin beats and congas."

Kid Frost's music, with thumping bass lines, shuffling beats, and almost whispered lyrics, makes it clear that Spanish rap is far from a novelty item. While his music has made him a hero in the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles, Frost intends to go international, and his music transcends barriers. "I want to see the stereotypes done away with. I'm tired of being labeled as a Chicano rapper." Frost is currently organizing a project called the Latin Alliance, which will bring together rappers from Nicaragua, Spain, Puerto Rico, and Brazil.

When questioned about some of the violent imagery in his lyrics, Kid Frost pines and explains eloquently. "On 'La Raza' [the race], that's why I talk about my clip being loaded and pointing a gun at your face, it means my mind is loaded with rhymes. That's why on the video when I say 'I'm packing my piece,' you see a big peace sign. I just want to be a conscience for kids who don't have one."

On the nationalist tip, Latin Empire's single "Puerto Rican and Proud" is spreading their message on MTV. As Ricardo Rodriguez says, "We're the windshield wipers of rap. We clean the sights of the youth, so they can stop seeing blurry, see correctly and straight."

Dimitri Erlich and Elizabeth Hanly



Dear Elvis,

In "Fight the Power," Public Enemy says, "Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant shit to me," and then they say you were a racist. Is that true, man?

Melvin Johnson  
The Bronx

Yo Melvin,

Let me tell you something, son. I've always understood a lot about what those boys in Public Enemy are hollaring about. I never had no luck with that 911 deal, myself. So when I heard that line about me, I sat down on a stool and just cried. You know, I grew up way down South back when colored people didn't get treated real fair. Then later on when I started singing, some people said it was "nigger music." I know what it's like to feel like an outcast, too. When I got real b.g., I couldn't even go out of the house for a sandwich. What I'm trying to say is that I've had a real strange life. If I ever sounded like a racist I didn't mean to, and I sure am sorry I guess, to borrow some of that new colored talk: It's an Elvis thang. You wouldn't understand.

Peace.

*elvis*

Elvis P

P.S. Chuck D, if you're reading this, boy, keep fightin' that power. No hard feelings. Elvis is right behind you.





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Of Music Do We Find Something  
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Jazzie B. speaks loudly and carries a big stick.

# Jazzie in Japan

**Originally a sound system, Soul II Soul have become a live extravaganza, as they recently revealed in Tokyo on the opening night of their world tour.**

Like something out of *Blade Runner*—though owned by the Pax Corporation instead of the Tyrell Corporation—Tokyo's Psyche Theater is awe-inspiring enough to crush the life out of any party. So when Soul II Soul kicked off their world tour on the venue's opening night, they added some much-needed warmth to the proceedings. If the crowd didn't exactly party like it was 1999, it wasn't for lack of inducement.

At least a quarter of the audience was comprised of middle-aged men in business suits, standing stolidly with incongruous corsages in their lapels (the flowers meant you could drink for free, as I discovered to my chagrin after mine was heisted). The rest of the audience were mostly Japanese kids, the majority of whom apparently viewed dancing as a sign of impoliteness. Gentle swaying was the general rule. Clapping after songs was kept to a respectful minimum. Or

maybe they were just cowed by the laser projections and rocket ships floating by above them.

The show concentrated heavily on Soul II Soul's latest record, *Volume II: 1990—A New Decade*. Surprisingly, considering their origins as a sound system, the band didn't rely on backing tapes or turntables, attempting—on the whole successfully—to re-create the lush sound of their records by using only live musicians. Saummeister Jazzie B. kept a fairly low profile throughout the performance, preferring to crouch on the side of the stage with his cane and introduce the three Soul II Soul divas as they took turns singing. Towards the end of the show he grew more animated, stalking the crowd like a madman, waving his cane, delivering fervent lectures lifted more or less verbatim from the records. It was an entertaining, if somewhat restrained, performance.

Jim Greer

In the 1950s when the first large migration of black West Indian labor was invited to Great Britain, neither host nor migrants expected their sojourn to be permanent. Five decades later, Great Britain must deal—and deal fairly—with a native population of black Britons that they never intended to be there. This social condition (and its metaphorical extensions) are what ex-Soul II Soul vocalist Caron Wheeler describes on her solo EMI debut, *UK Blak*.

"We were canned into coming to Britain to get rich," Wheeler asserts. "Basically the ads to get us to leave Jamaica read, 'Instant wealth! Your mother country welcomes you into the British Commonwealth! Well, to me in retrospect, there was nothing common about the wealth they promised. The wealth was definitely held to one side, while the commoners were kept on the other.'"

Wheeler's feelings about the need for blacks to be paid what their labor is worth says much about both her departure from Soul II Soul and her expert manipulation of the subsequent multilabel bidding war for her solo project. EMI, never known for a particularly progressive A&R policy, paid big bucks to woo Wheeler away from the likes of CBS, Warner Bros., RCA, and others. Wheeler, having been an eight-year veteran of the supporting-singer circuit behind stars such as Elvis Costello, Howard Johnson, Nona Hendryx, and Phil Collins, knew just what to ask for.

**The voice that textured your most intimate moments last summer on Soul II Soul's *Keep On Movin'* is back. Caron Wheeler goes solo.**

"I chose EMI in America because I thought they were hungry," she explained. "To me it was a matter of 'put your money where your mouth is,' because I'm not in this business just for fun. Having artistic freedom along with a substantial monetary commitment were at the top of my list, because I know that what I am and what I want to say is difficult for the pop machinery to promote."

And what about her swift departure from the Soul II Soul collective? Is there bad blood between Caron and Jazzie B.?

"I knew before 'Keep On Movin'' and 'Back to Life' were even released that I only wanted to be a featured artist and not a member of Soul II Soul," Wheeler insists. "I felt from the moment I met Jazzie B. that I really liked him, but that because I had my own ideas—poetically, musically, and creatively—there would not be room in what Jazzie wanted to do for both his dreams and mine."

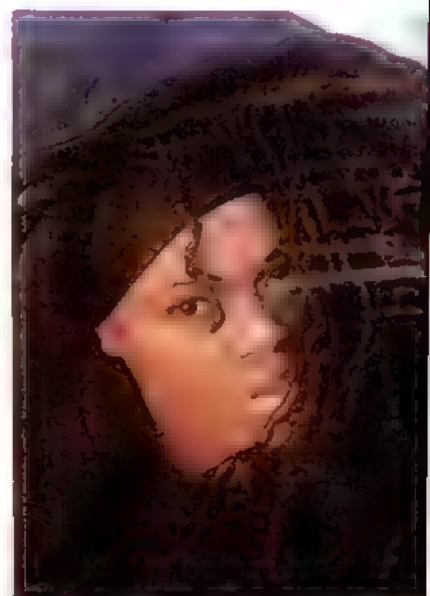
Some of the material on *UK Blak* makes oblique reference to what must have been the Soul II Soul working relationship and

Wheeler's need to break away. "This Is Mine" in particular could apply both to an attempt to keep talented black females in a supportive (not equal) position in business and politics—as well as the way white society likes to keep blacks in general in subordinate roles. By writing 50 percent of the material here under her own Orange Tree Productions, Ltd., and hand-selecting a number of newer producers from New York's Jungle Brothers to Jamaica's own ragamuffin-dancehall kings, Steery & Cleve, Wheeler insures that the sound of *UK Blak* will not merely be a clone of her triumphs with Soul II Soul.

"I naturally go for the contrast between sweet, warm vocal arrangements and big, raw bass and percussion on the production end," Wheeler offers. "And while I would be bored to death if every song on the album had to sound alike—be it all reggae, or all dance-oriented R&B—every track will have those elements, at least. I wanted to paint a collage of all the music I like—things that I wasn't hearing anyone else doing."

Carol Cooper

## solo soul



Caron Wheeler keeps on movin' with a new solo career.





**J&B in a hip joint.**

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Branford Marsalis gets to tool his horn.

**To do what I do takes guts  
Disagree? Don't give a fuck!  
Jus' gimme a pen & I'll  
runamuck  
N' bum-rush yor ass like  
rubber duck!**

Back in the days, block parties in Medina (Brooklyn) usually led to fires, fights, shoot-outs, robberies, or deaths, but I loved going to 'em anyway. I'd tramp to the jam with sweaty palms, & an irregular heartbeat. The DJ had his set juiced into the lightpost, stealing current which would usually knock the whole block into darkness. One night, the MC was rockin' the mic with one hand & holdin' his burner (gun) with the other, while the DJ mixed a drink & scratched at the same time. I thought I was the only one not dancin' till I saw a flock of females checkin' out the def MC. Then I said, "I wanna learn how to rhyme." I wanted that power of magical conversation to be able to pull all the fly honeys and get 'em on my nature stick. When I hear Eric B. scratch and Rakim rhyme, I close my eyes n' I can see that night as clear as a video.

Rakim or the "R-senal" as he deems himself, has chosen the nostalgic role of being kingpin of the gangland. But with his new album *Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em*, he leaves fingerprints on yor brain, not on yor gun. Make no mistake—this is not a comeback, it's a funky drum track.

Though a hustler, it's clear that Rakim's not sellin' you on clouds of coke or bootleggie. This isn't yor ordinary dapper dan gangster. Rakim, in the name of Allah

(and the teachings of Islam), is a god that rules over the muzik industry like an overlord. Smooth as gas he flows with the vapor like the night air to dare the unprepared and disrespect plastic poets.

Not a friendly MC, Rakim has an instinctive survival attitude that'll shove you off a cliff. If you don't believe me just take a very quick glance at his DJ Eric B. Tell me, is that not a face on y a mother would love? Don't answer that—it's rhetorical. If anybody thinks that Eric B. is just a showpiece, they can suck duck sauce! B. iz far bad & he sure as hell makes the day go by with his crate of breaks.

Since the team began they've maintained the same mental attitude, unlike others who've jumped on the Afrocentric bandwagon, callin' themselves teachers of prophets in order to sell you perfumed rap. Who the hell needs another militant rap group that's only suckin' the stick of Public Enemy. That ain't no knowledge—it's commercialism!

A friend tells me that this album isn't so hot & insinuates that Rakim has come back with some old style. His attitude is that many people don't like the "R," but "many people" aren't writing this piece. Book smarts n' street smarts.



Eric B. &amp; Rakim: causing block party flashbacks.

# Mo' BETTER VIEWS

When Spike Lee asked respected jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis to write a piece for SPIN, he agreed. The only problem was that Spike needed the piece in a week. With no time for research or interviews, Marsalis got on the stream of consciousness tip.

## Four things that white people never say to black folks:

- 1) "Hey, I just moved into an exclusive neighborhood and there are a few more homes available. You should give 'em a call..."
- 2) "I love you, son-in-law..."
- 3) "Could you hold my purse for me?"
- 4) "I'm having trouble getting a taxi. Could you help me out?"

## The 2 Live Crew influences list:

W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Charlie Parker, Nat "King" Cole, August Wilson.

## Some of my favorite rock bands:

Led Zep, Yes, Funkadelic (check out the first four records, especially Cosmic Stop), Police, Genesis, Living Colour, and the ultimate is Hendrix's Band of Gypsies.

## For those who aspire to be hip:

Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane, Miles Davis (pre-1968), Ornette Coleman, Phineas Newborn, Jr., Lester Young, and (D.J. Premiere will shoot me for this but) Digital Underground and A Tribe Called Quest.

**Frankie Crocker:** Thank you for making the airwaves in New York listenable again.

... **Donahue** needs his ass whipped for using **2 Live Crew** on his show about rap instead of **Kool Moe Dee** and **Public Enemy** or a number of rappers who understand and can articulate American English. ... As much as I despise what the pop music industry has become, if I wanted to be an entertainer, I would make sure my show cooks like **Madonna's**. ... On **Quincy Jones's** record *Back on the Block*, **Big Daddy Kane** says Dizzy's name like it's a disease (I've got D zzy-ga-i p-see; I've got six weeks to live).

To Beverly Smith, host of BET's talk show, *Other Voices*, who said on her so-called jazz segment: "Europeans love jazz. When Sting brought his jazz band to Europe, they sold out every concert." Your letter bomb is in the mail. ... **Walter Davis, Jr.**, one of the few artists left that could really play bebop (the spontaneous invention and regeneration of melody, not the regurgitation of a series of licks that it has become), died in June. You were too "cute" baby. We'll miss you.

**Branford Marsalis**

# Conscious Comics

Kyle Baker, child of an African-American mother and too many issues of Spiderman, creates something different with *Why I Hate Saturn*.



In the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comic, the heroes are named after European painters (Raphael, Michelangelo), while the villains are black musical styles (Be-Bop, Rock Steady). Most other black comics characters remain sidekicks and tokens. So when Rick, male lead of Kyle Baker's *Why I Hate Saturn*, speaks bitterly about being black in America, it's truthful and a rarity for the medium. "Look," Rick says, "black music, black culture is in, but black people will never be in."

"I always want to put black characters in my books," says Baker, "but the thing is that if you make a character black, suddenly you are saying something about blacks." Baker doesn't want readers to confuse his characters with his 24-year-old African-American self: He made *Saturn's* main character, Anne, a white woman specifically so that people wouldn't mistake his story for autobiography.

*Why I Hate Saturn* combines bold inks, subtle sepias, and an agile script, but Baker denies his 200-page graphic novel has any greater significance. "It's just a dopey old comic book," he insists. "I wrote it in short sections so you could read it on the toilet."

**Carvin Edwards**





SOUL  
STRUGGLE  
BELIEF  
PERSISTENCE  
BEAUTY  
TRIUMPH.

*the*  
**NEVILLE BROTHERS**  
**BROTHER'S**  
**KEEPER**

The Grammy-winning  
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have spent their lives  
making some of the most  
original, energetic and  
inspiring music in America.  
From Aaron Neville's classic  
"Tell It Like It Is"  
to revolutionary groups  
like The Meters.  
Everyone who hears their  
music is moved by it.  
**BROTHER'S KEEPER**  
is their new album  
featuring "Bird On A Wire"  
and "River Of Life."

SEE  
**THE NEVILLE BROTHERS**  
ON TOUR WITH  
**LINDA RONSTADT**  
THROUGHOUT THE FALL.

Produced by Malcolm Burn and  
The Neville Brothers, except for "River Of Life"  
produced by Steve Jordan and  
The Neville Brothers and "Bird On A Wire"  
produced and arranged by David A. Stewart.  
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## No More Rap at New Music Seminar?

New York's recent New Music Seminar ended not with a whimper but with a bang, as members of Above the Law and Ice Cube's Lench Mob squared off just before the final panel discussion in a face-smashing, table-throwing brawl. The fight was the culmination of growing problems which seriously threaten the future of rap at the annual convention. Seminar officials are considering a cutback on the number of panels that deal specifically with rap, and instead integrating the hip hop community into the general new music discussions.

"The New Music Seminar is a busi-

ness convention," explains executive director Tom Silverman, and owner of Tommy Boy Records. "Almost everybody in rap has a posse that never even registers with us. We get hundreds of people, most of whom will never be real players in the music business, just hanging around the hotel and trying to sneak in. This year we confiscated seventy-five counterfeit admission badges. At least half of these were taken from rap people."



Above the Law, from left K.M.G., Cold 187UM, Total K-Oss, Go-Mack.

"This is terrible," complains publicist Bill Adler of Rhyme & Reason. "It sounds like, 'We have to do some business here in this nice hotel, so let's get rid of these animals. This doesn't sound like the Tom Silverman I know.' And besides, there's absolutely no doubt that the dominant 'new music' now is rap."

According to Silverman, however, rap has gotten a disproportionate amount of attention at the seminar, since only 6 percent of this year's reg-

istrants officially indicated that they were affiliated with the music. In light of this statistic, rap followers that descend upon Times Square's Marriott Marquis are being regarded as an unnecessary problem, solvable by removing their reason for showing up—rap itself.

"The hotel is really pissed off," Silverman confesses. "This year we managed to import two posers from three thousand miles away just so they could get into a fight."

"Fuck Tom Silverman," mutters Ice Cube. "They've been waiting for a little bullshit incident just to kick rap out."

Since his departure from NWA and California's Ruthless Records earlier this year (see SPIN, April '90; June '90), Ice Cube has been increasingly at odds in the press with former labelmates Above the Law. Though he claims that "some fans" started the fight, he admits that there is much bad blood between his Lench Mob and ATL.

"The people I'm with don't like it when somebody talks shit about me," Ice Cube explains.

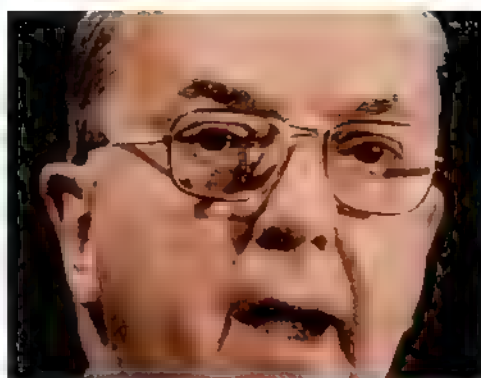
"Above The Law just plain fucked the Lench Mob up," replies ATL's Go Mack. "They started it. We ended it."

"Everywhere we went in the hotel after that, people would run," laughs ATL's Cold 187um.

"Just how we like to do business!" howls Go Mack.

Next year they just might have to take their business to the parking lot.

Mark Blackwell



Jesse Helms,  
Incumbent U.S. senator  
from North Carolina.



Harvey Gantt,  
Helms' Democratic  
opponent

## Jesse Helms vs. Harvey Gantt

In 1968, Jesse Helms, now a U.S. senator from North Carolina, characterized the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement as "moral degenerates." A staunch defender of segregation, he stated in 1968 that black students wouldn't want to attend white schools where they would be "forced to compete beyond their capabilities." Ten years later he said that segregation wasn't wrong "for its time," and later defended the backward position, saying he believes in "freedom of choice."

Ironically, the same man that suggested the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a communist who "courted violence" faces an African-American opponent in his November reelection bid. The opponent, former Charlotte, N.C., Mayor Harvey Gantt, took the Democratic nomination in a runoff race last June (making him the first black recipient of a Democratic senatorial nomination in American history). And, while conventional wisdom says that a black candidate has little chance of getting elected in North Carolina, both polls and pundits show the liberal Gantt can beat the hard right ideologue.

Helms relies on negative campaigning to beat the odds, exploiting the fears and subtle hatred of his constituents. Indeed, he's already mounted an attack on Gantt, distributing literature saying Gantt is "backed by the powerful homosexual political lobby."

What Helms doesn't mention is his

own suspect network of financial contributors. While clocking megadollars from a parade of far-right lobbies such as the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, the Christian Nationalist Crusade, the Conservative Caucus, Eagle Forum, the Heritage Foundation, the John Birch Society, Gun Owners of America, the Moral Majority, and the National Right-to-Work Committee, Helms reportedly pocketed over \$10,000 for speeches he delivered at conferences sponsored by the American Leadership Conference (a flagship organization of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church).

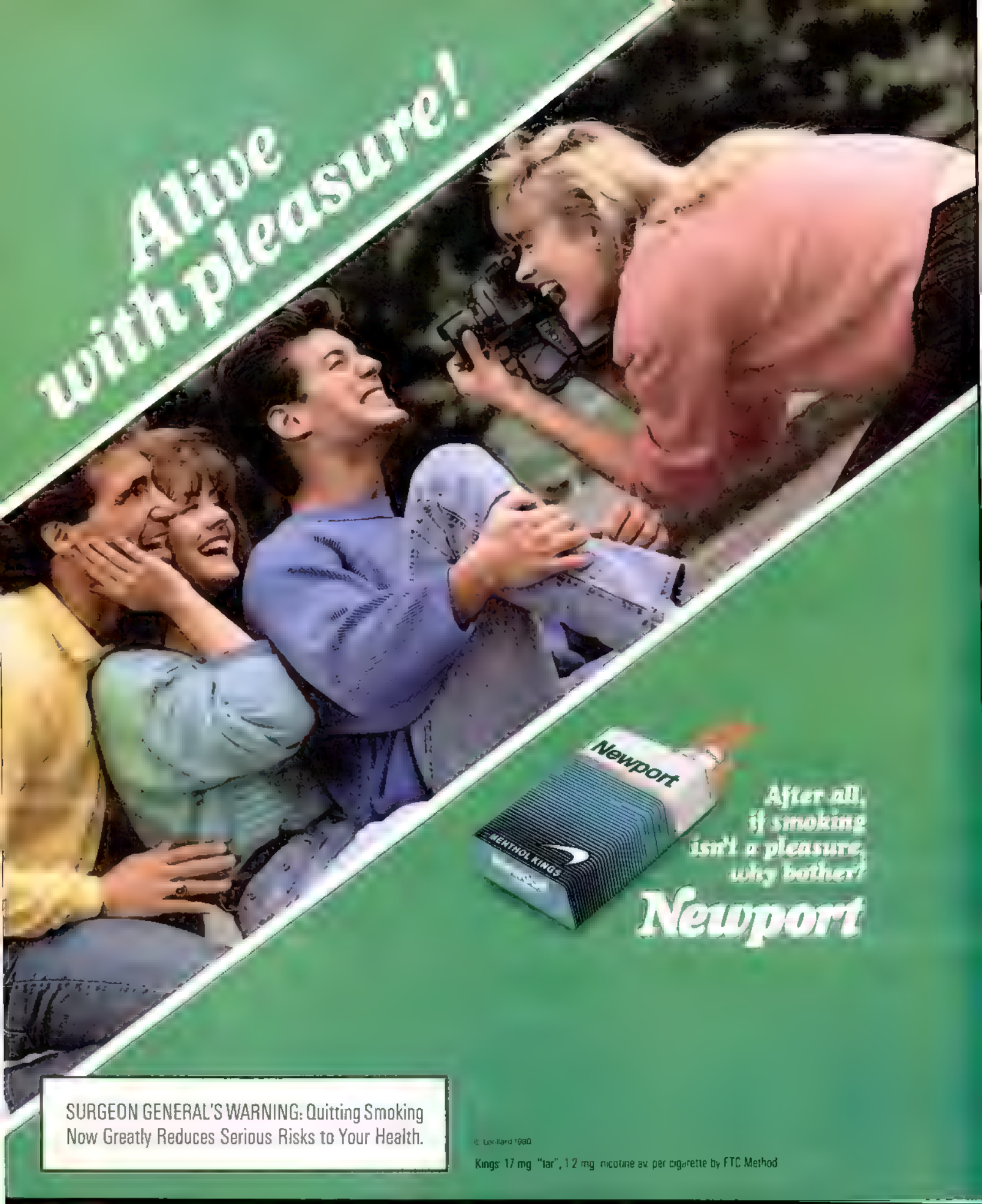
Helms's financial support is intimating (some estimates indicate the senator can bank on \$2.5 million), but Gantt may have history on his side. In 1983, he became the first-ever black mayor of Charlotte, a city that is 75 percent white. He was reelected overwhelmingly in 1985.

On an advertisement for his 1984 reelection campaign, Helms quoted a newspaper piece: "Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., wants the State Board of Elections to boost minority voter registration in North Carolina..." Then he added, "Ask yourself: Is this a proper use of taxpayer funds?" Artists, civil libertarians and other right-thinking folks should answer "yes" to voter registration; "no" to Helms's salary.

Brian Brown

Danny Fields is on vacation. Talking All That Jazz will be back next month.

Alive  
with pleasure!



After all,  
if smoking  
isn't a pleasure,  
why bother?

**Newport**

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:** Quitting Smoking  
Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.

© Lorillard 1990

Kings 17 mg "tar", 1.2 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method



# Ain't That a Bitch

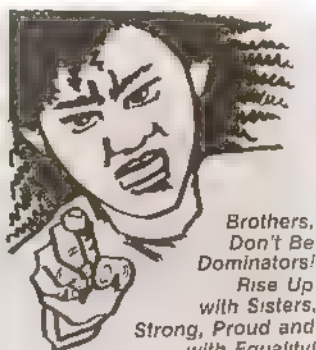
Is Ice Cube really such a ladies' man? Not according to the Revolutionary Communist Party.

"What about the tobacco industry using these beautiful ladies to sell their cigarettes?" rapper Ice Cube demands. "Talk about sex objects!"

Ice Cube isn't starting an antismoking campaign. He's just defending himself against accusations that he has a bad attitude towards women. If *You're Dissing The Sisters, You Ain't Fighting The Power* is a Revolutionary Communist Party pamphlet which faults rappers—especially Ice Cube's former group NWA—for what the party sees as a major inconsistency in rappers' otherwise admirable approach to radical social change. "How are we gonna unite all of those who hate this system when the music puts down half of the frontline fighters?" asks the pamphlet, in reference to the "bitches" and "hos" that run rampant through many rap songs.

In explaining himself to such detractors, Ice Cube describes a situation in which an 18-year-old girl is turned off by a young man simply because he is poor: "Sex is very powerful. That guy's gonna rob me, rob you, hang out on the corner and sell crack, or whatever, so he can get that Mercedes Benz and fat gold rope. Then he pulls up and she's running out to the car and gettin' all over him. I put a label on that young lady. She's a bitch. I make the kid see that and say to her, 'Yo, if you don't want me for what I got then don't come my way.' Then he doesn't have to rob me and she's stuck out there looking like a bitch to her peers. Maybe that'll change her attitude too. That's why I use those words in my music."

The pamphlet stresses, however, that these references are simply glorifying "naked and cruel power over women," and that the men portrayed "don't even want the sisters to have a good time." This charge is backed up by Ice Cube himself on his *Amer-iKKKa's Most Wanted* album with rhymes like "Women—they're good for nothing. Nah maybe one thing. To serve needs to my ding-a-ling." And while the rapper emphasizes in conversation that he's only talking about a particular type of "bad" woman, lines such as "Pulled out the third leg; pumped it in. She said, 'Will you call me?' Yeah I'll call you a 'bitch' or a 'ho' after I ball you" suggest that even a woman who attempts to be "good" is fair game for his wrath. Ice Cube attempts to steer around this by suggesting that those who are offended may be the ones at fault themselves. "My girlfriend doesn't get upset when I say 'bitch' because she knows she ain't no



Brothers,  
Don't Be  
Dominators!  
Rise Up  
with Sisters,  
Strong, Proud and  
with Equality!  
Fight the Power,  
Bury the System!

IF YOU'RE DISSING  
THE SISTERS, YOU AIN'T  
FIGHTING THE POWER

bitch," he says. "If it bothers you then maybe you better take a close look at yourself and your own character."

Though Ice Cube's defenses never seem to fully mask many of the harsh references he makes (e.g., When a "hussy" needs an abortion he muses, "I thought deep about giving up the money. What I need to do is kick the bitch in the tummy"), he does show a glimmer of hope on the new album with "It's a Man's World," a duet with his Lench



Turbo "Homophobe" Harris.



Ice Cube, dissing the sisters?

Mob's Yo-Yo. The female rapper drops sassy comebacks to Ice Cube's manly boasting (when he brags about "bringing home the bacon" she suggests that he "find another ho to cook it"), and by the end of the song he regretfully admits that she can "flow" and that she's "kinda dope," even though she still can't "fade" him.

The Revolutionary Communist Party's bottom line on the word "bitch" is that it "plays the same social role as the word 'nig-

ger' applied to black people." Ice Cube isn't disturbed by this. "So call me a nigger," he says. "That's okay. I'm the 1990s nigger. The one owning his own business, selling records and controlling his own life. The people that wanna hold us down better hope to God that all so-called niggers aren't like this one right here. Now that would be a real problem, wouldn't it? I'll prove I'm no nigger. Now you prove you're no bitch."

Mark Blackwell

## Homophobic Hip/House

Despite a widespread following among the gay community, SNAP rapper Turbo Harris is a homophobe.

Turbo Harris, of the German rap/house group SNAP, shocked the audience after the band's recent AIDS benefit at Buddies, a gay nightclub in Boston, by throwing club owner Dennis Moreau against the wall, choking him, and saying, "Nobody told me I was working in a fag joint."

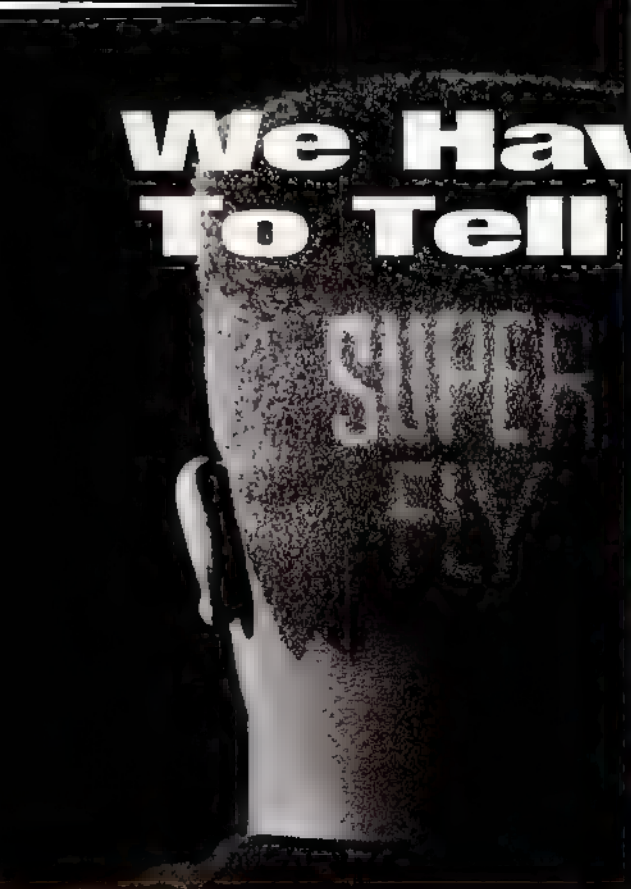
Afterwards, the 6'2" Harris attempted to justify his violent actions by claiming, "Someone pinched me in the ass." Robert Levy, a witness and reporter for the *Boston Mirror*, scoffs at Harris's excuse. "Nobody was able to touch him. He was surrounded by band members and security. Penny Ford, the female lead, signed some autographs, but Harris refused to. He got more and more upset, asked for the owner and called him a queer, then grabbed him by the neck."

Club employee Kevin Riley, who ran over to help, was also injured by Harris. Both victims are pressing full charges. "Because it's an assault related to sexual orientation, it's covered under the hate crimes act [a Massachusetts law that has been used to prosecute anti-gay acts of violence since 1987] and penalties are severe. In this case, that would mean a felony," says Steven Huber of Fenway Center, the gay and lesbian health organization the benefit was staged for.

SNAP's "The Power," which has been removed from the playlist of Boston's Kiss-108 (WXKS), was a top hit in every gay club across the country prior to the incident. Another irony is that Penny Ford's brother died of AIDS, which is why SNAP did the benefit. Ford said afterwards, "I cannot forgive stupidity, but I can forgive ignorance, and I'm very upset this had to occur."

Staci Bonner

# We Have The Right To Tell It Like It Is.



RETURN OF

## SUPERFLY

ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

From the creator of the coolest r & b soundtrack of the '70s comes the dope soundtrack for the '90s. Curtis Mayfield is funky fresh and in full effect droppin' science with rap's best on the Return Of Superfly.

Featuring the first single and video "Superfly 1990" - Curtis Mayfield and Ice-T.

Produced by Curtis Mayfield, Dr. Dre, Matt Dike and Michael Ross, Tony Gonzales, S. Reyes, J. Fortson, J. King, DJ Pooh, Will Griffin and Vince Edwards.

Ice-T appears courtesy of Sire Records, Inc.  
Tone Loe and Del Jet appear courtesy of Delicious Vinyl, Inc.  
Del Brown appears courtesy of Original Sound Recordings, Inc.  
Easy-E appears courtesy of Ruthless/Priority

## HELL BAND BLACK

A bold statement from C.P.O.

Anchored by Lil' Nation and produced by N.W.A.'s M.C. Ren, C.P.O. (Capital Punishment Organization) reports from the street with an album rough enough to send most rappers running for cover.

The debut features the single and video "Ballad Of A Menace"

Produced by M.C. Ren "The Ruthless Villain" for M.C. Ren Productions.  
Co-produced by "The Incredible Young D."



AT YOUR OWN RISK The new album from

## KING TEE

His Royal Badness, West Coast rapper King Tee, hits hard with a "Ruff Rhyme" and 13 other tales of life in the streets... and beyond. Remember, you've been warned.

Produced by King Tee, DJ Pooh, Bilal Bashir, J.R. Coes and Bronick Wroblewski, and E. Swift.

Breeze appears courtesy of LA Posse Productions/Atlantic Recording Corporation  
Ice Cube appears courtesy of and records exclusively for Priority Records, Inc.



# THE BLATANT TRUTH ON CAPITOL CASSETTES, COMPACT DISCS AND RECORDS.





# Radio Renaissance

*A maverick talent in a sea of mediocrity, radio renegade Frankie Crocker has made New York's airwaves listenable again.*

Last fall, top black radio programmer Frankie Crocker returned to the scene of his greatest triumphs, WBLS-FM. The man who in knowledgeable circles is credited with inventing the distinctive "urban contemporary" format (which was adopted and renamed contemporary hits radio by the nation's top Top 40 outlets), is back on New York's only black-owned station with a revolutionary mixed playlist he calls "free-form" radio.

"My whole thing now is to play the rhythms that are true and the talent that is good," Crocker says about his afternoon mix of gospel, reggae, rap, and current R&B. "Especially so the younger people who are listening have something to look up to. If everything they see and hear is mediocre, then that's all anybody is going to strive for."

Hired as program director by WBLS in '72, Crocker's moves are watched by the radio industry even when those moves are odd or initially unsuccessful. Acquitted of payola charges that were brought against him in 1976, and recovered from the death of a fiancée that helped drive him out of radio again in the mid-'80s, Crocker's career is still not free of controversy. He resents the fact that white-owned stations that do not address themselves in any way to the black community but air a dominant share of "black music" are allowed to command a higher advertising rate (and therefore pay higher salaries) than so-called "black radio."

"The three programmers of the top three 'power' format stations in L.A.—Scott Shannon at Pirate Radio, Gerry DeFrancesco who programs KIIS, and Jay Thomas, who couldn't outprogram WBLS when he was competing against me in New York—are making a combined base salary of something like seven million dollars a year," Crocker maintains. "But all the black people collectively in radio in L.A. are lucky if they make a million a year combined."

Known as the man who broke Devo's "Whip It" and Blondie's "Heart of Glass" on New York's top-rated station when those tracks were new, will it be too much longer before the Crocker of the '90s becomes as important to funky, progressive white rock as he is to black artists?

"Because radio is still segregated and polarized, there are certain things I know are good that I can't play yet," says Crocker. "But it's a whole educational process. You listen and you grow."



Frankie Crocker: a reason to turn your radio back on.

Carol Cooper

## Endangered Species

*In supposedly liberal Boston, the police have imposed martial law on black youth.*

"The Panthers thus became the native Vietcong, the ghetto became the village in which the Vietcong were hidden, and in the ensuing search-and-destroy operations, everyone in the village became suspect."—James Baldwin on the end of the Black Panthers, *No Name In The Street*, 1972.

I thought it was funny at first. I was on my way to a Black Rock Coalition gig when two men—one white, one Hispanic, dressed in ex-G.I. chic complete with three-day-old beards—sprang out of their dusty brown Chevy, which had pulled up behind me on the sidewalk. After they chased me down,

they told me they were cops. "Looking for a robbery suspect; you fit the description." Big joke. Later, not laughing, I found his picture on a wanted poster in a local store: 6 inches taller, 75 pounds heavier, and 3 shades darker than me.

No news to most black folk. The so-called war on drugs and gangs has twisted itself into a war against our communities. Armed violent street gangs do cause painful and real terror—driving many young people to watch *Prime Time Pets* rather than risk chillin' with their friends outside. But in too many inner-city communities, the police act like just another gang. If you're black,

you're treated like the colonized instead of the "public" the police are supposed to serve and protect.

In Boston, behavior which used to embarrass honest law enforcement officials is now official policy. Last fall, Judge Cortland A. Mathers of the Superior Court used words like "martial law" to describe and denounce the police practice of stopping and frisking every young black man or woman they saw.

Of course, his opinion don't mean jack if you're lying face first on the hot asphalt, black grit in your mouth and hands over your head, while your homeboy (or boyfriend) stands shaking next to you with his pants and underwear dangling around his ankles—at noon on a crowded street. Straight up. I've spoken to dozens of teenagers whose only crime was fashion. Their baseball caps, Adidas sweatshirts, and gold jewelry are red flags to the boys in blue. Let's shake this nigger down right quick. "It makes me feel like an animal, like I don't

belong on this planet, if this person can come out of nowhere to make me do this," says one 15-year-old. No wonder even the genteel NAACP is obsessed with police brutality: At their recent national convention in L.A., every single one of their chapters only wanted to talk about these state-sanctioned street gangs.

Out of fear or simply resignation, precious few speak out. But some members of the black community welcome the police presence. This is understandable, since this is the only attention that any city, state, or federal government pays to black neighborhoods these days. You take what you can get. The resignation betrays a deeper hurt: Our generation should have reaped the benefits of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements but most of us can't see the change; only the hoses have been put on the shelf. One hint of hope is a class action lawsuit against the city of Boston and the police department, seeking an end to this madness. The main plaintiff is Rolando Carr, who was shot in the back while being frisked by the police.

You couldn't give me all the jeeps in Oakland to walk the streets of 1990 armed only with a uniform, a badge, and the standard police handgun—the modern-day equivalent of a spitwad. But that's no excuse for bad policework, and some folks in Boston are using this lawsuit to tell the police department what time it really is.

James Bernard



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### Bed-Stuy Nursery Rhyme

There was an old lady who lived in Bed-Stuy,  
She bumped in a wall because she was high,  
She jumped out the window 'cause  
she thought she could fly,  
I looked out my window,  
I saw her go by.

### Dead Bird

Dead Bird,  
Yo Dead Bird get up and fly.

### Ode to Sharon

I remember how we felt when we were together.  
I remember the long walks in the park we used to take.  
I remember how I used to kiss you on the cheek ever so gently,  
and tell you how much I loved you.  
I remember the moonlight as it glistened off your face...  
Bitch, why you leave me!

Sex is a big headache to me. You gotta always worry  
about wearin' a condom...  
in fact, I'm wearin' one now.

There's a lot of nasty people out here who will give you  
a disease and won't care.

I used to mess with this girl, she gave me herpes.

I used to mess with this girl who worked at a pet store...

She gave me 'chirpes'

I used to mess with this girl who worked at 7-Eleven...

She gave me 'Slurpies'

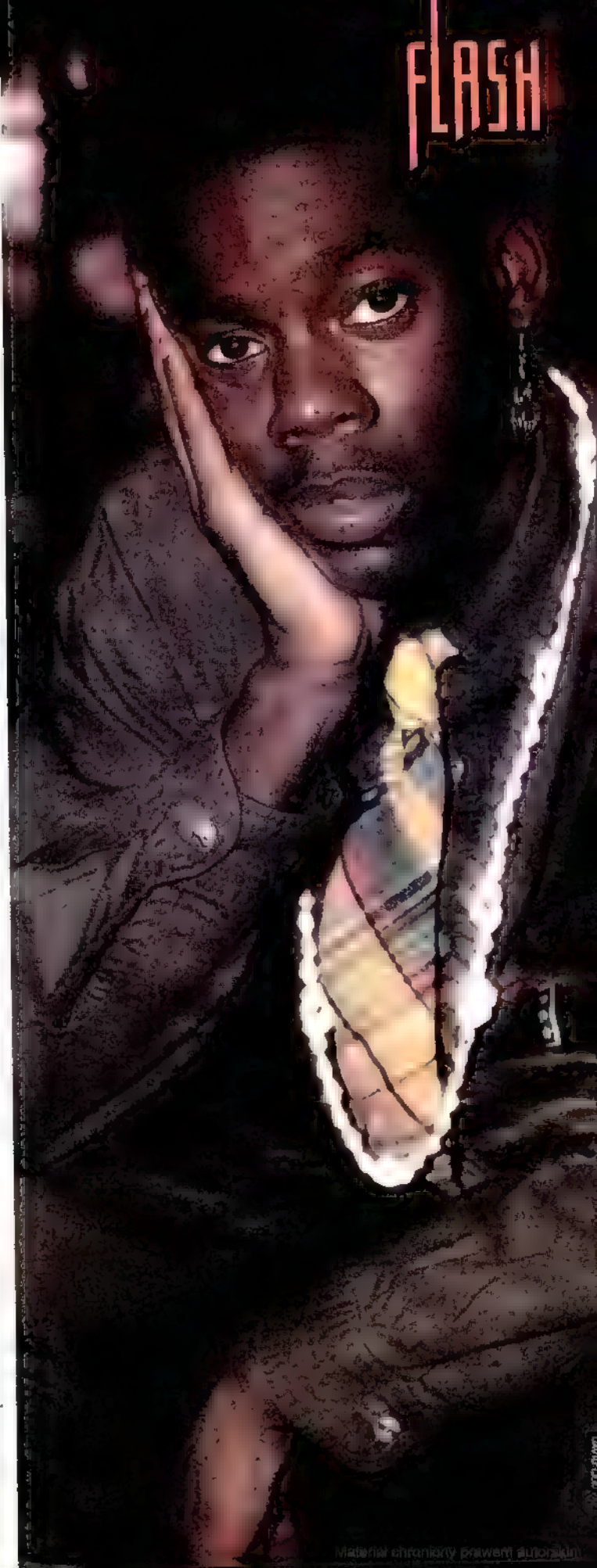
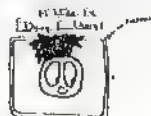
I used to mess with this girl who gave me Y.D...

I used to mess with this girl who was a rap fan...

She gave me P.E.

I used to mess with this girl who had a Saturday Night fever...

She gave me the 'BeeGees'.





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# THE SUMMER.

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# EDDIE

## An exclusive interview with Eddie Murphy by SPIKE LEE.

In the five years I've known Eddie Murphy, this interview was our first opportunity to sit down and talk for any real length of time. Whose fault is it? Both of ours—we were too busy, too far apart, and too, too different (so we thought). After finishing, we were two young African-American males from Brooklyn.

**SPIKE:** This is gonna be painless. Some of these questions I know the answers to already, but we're just not going to assume anything. So the first question is: Why do you think we haven't worked together yet? People always come up to me and ask me, "When are you and Eddie gonna hook up?"

**EDDIE:** I don't know. This weird thing happened, and I don't even know if it's something that people do consciously. What happens is a bunch of separate camps and shit. There's the Spike camp, the Eddie camp, the Keenan camp, the Robert Townsend camp, and everybody's off doing their own shit so nobody is collaborating, so it never happens. And it's stupid.

I'm looking forward to the day when we do work together. I think that one of the good things that could come from this interview is that we can clear the air. Like I said before, people always come up to me and say, "So what's up between you and Eddie?" And I say, "Nothing!" I know that people

ask you that too, because in the past we have said a couple things about each other, but I think that's in the past. Because for one thing, I never said that you and Bill Cosby should be shot for not living in the ghetto. That was a big brouhaha. But the thing that really did it was the *Los Angeles Times* article, that series on blacks in Hollywood.

I said or you said? What'd they say?

Both of us were in it. I know I've been susceptible to this, where I've taken some bait I shouldn't have taken. Am I gonna take the bait and say something derogatory? That's what was really behind that article. At *Do The Right Thing*, the L.A. premiere, we both went over in the corner and talked. And you asked if I said that thing about you and Bill Cosby, and I said, "No, everything's cool." And the next day I'm on the Arsenio Hall show, and he tried to assassinate me. I said, "What are you talking about? I saw Eddie last night at the premiere, you know,



everything's cool." But everybody was talking about that. Did you see it? Arsenio attacking you?

Yeah. Because the way it came up to me was like he was defending your honor. And I didn't think it was a case where your honor needed to be defended. He was bringing up stuff from eight years ago, like, "What about you and Whoopi and blue contacts?" I said, "C'mon man, that's old, me and Whoopi are cool, that shit you're talking about is old."

What was he defending about me that you had said? I forget.

I don't remember exactly. I just found it strange that me and you, the night before, with every difference we had, we settled, and the next night on national television he was jumping all over me. Both of us have been slammed for our portrayal of women and gay people in our films. Have you gotten slack from gays?

Yeah, *School Daze*. The frats, the fellas were stepping, gamma, gamma, fag, fag, gamma gamma fag fag. Oh, man, that was funny.

They still called it homophobic. I mean, as far as criticism goes, do you listen to it? Do you pay heed, or just say, Fuck 'em, they can't take a joke? In particular, sensitive issues like homosexuals and lesbians and women.

Well, I haven't really been the recipient of much anger from the gays recently. My stuff with the gays was behind *Delirious*. I said something about AIDS. I said something so long ago that people don't even remember what I said. A lot of people don't understand that when I said what I said—back then—I was 21 years old. And it was a new disease and nobody understood it. And now I am a man and I know it's a much more sensitive issue, so I wouldn't even joke about it. But as far as doing a joke about a gay person—gay people are people just like everybody else, and I'll do jokes about anybody. If I think that something is funny, I say it. And I listen to criticism when I think that someone is being objective with their criticism. I can tell if someone's criticism is rooted in envy or if someone's criticism is rooted in the fact that they just don't like somebody. And I don't take heed of bullshit like that.

Do you read all your reviews?  
Uh, yes.

What do you think about the critical response? We were talking about this on the phone. The way I see it, they only want one black person up at the top anyway, and even though you've made two billion dollars for Paramount and Hollywood, I still think they'd rather have somebody white in that position. And any time there's a white boy that comes around that might take the title from you, like Tom Cruise or whoever, it's like, yeah, yeah, take it from Eddie.

But as far as the critical response to *Another 48 Hrs.*, I thought the movie was alright. And after doing a picture that was received both commercially and critically as fucked up as *Harlem Nights* was [laughs], after doing a picture that was viewed as a shitty movie, I should have done a movie that was great as opposed to a movie that was alright. So the criticism for *48 Hrs.*, I didn't freak out and go, "Oh no, they're fucking me over and they're just coming after me 'cause I'm Eddie." You know when I felt like that? When I did *Com-*

*ing To America*, 'cause I felt that was a really good movie and it got really bad criticism. It was like, Well what the fuck do they want me to do, you know? But this movie I think was an okay movie, I mean we got some bad reviews and we got some good ones. I didn't expect it to be like, either or.

Now that you mention *Harlem Nights*—for me, Eddie, one of the most hardest scenes for me to ever watch was when you had that fight with Della Reese.

Hard or it was funny?

I didn't think it was funny because with me, when I saw Della Reese I saw my grandmother, I saw every old black woman I know. And no matter what any old black woman would do to me, I don't think I would ever punch her in the mouth or shoot her toes off.

Okay.

I just wanted to say that.

Oh, okay, I thought it was a question. Did you ever hear an old Richard Pryor album called *Craps (After Hours)*? Della Reese's character is based on that character, Kiss My Ass, Big Bertha. She's this madam that works in this place, you know, and—

But, Eddie, for me, when you see Richard Pryor talking about various characters, that's one thing, but when you see it dramatized, you're like, rock'em, sock'em.

Did you see it in a movie theater or a private screening?

I saw it in a movie theater.  
And was the audience full?

Yeah, it was full.

And when I had the fight scene with Della Reese, were they screaming, laughing?

Yeah, they were laughing.

There you go. It was a comic moment. Who's to say that you can't hit a woman in comedy? It was a joke

**"I think we agree on most things; I just have to have a different approach because my house is bugged, my phones were tapped, my bedroom was bugged. And that goes with Jesse Jackson coming to my house . . . Minister Farrakhan coming to my house."**

I just saw my grandmother up there.

It was a comic moment. You didn't laugh at all at that fight scene?

I did at the beginning. But then it didn't become funny anymore.

They screamed throughout the whole scene. Throughout the whole scene, they laughed at that. The joke was, I got my ass whipped by this old woman. That's funny. See, when you're talking about comedy you're talking about apples and oranges. So when we did that at the test screening, 50 percent of the people would go, "The funniest shit I've ever seen in my life was when you fought Della Reese," and 50 percent of the people would have the reaction you had: How could you punch a woman in a scene? But I thought it was funny.

What is your fascination with Elvis? I don't know any black people who like Elvis Presley.  
Well, that's a good way of putting it.

I mean, people are gonna like who they want, but as I sit here and see that picture of Elvis looking at me—

For you to understand Elvis you'd have to to—what's a good way of putting it? Elvis has more presence than any entertainer ever. When he was there he was there. One of the things that's fascinating to me about Elvis Presley is that if you look at him he looks like he's totally in control of everything, but beneath that, he's totally out of control. I think that's fascinating.

When'd you start digging Elvis?

I don't know if you can say it's "digging," like I'm a fan. I think he's a fascinating person.

You don't got no wing in your house dedicated to Elvis Presley, do you?

I have a room with some Elvis pictures in it. I have a room with lots of pictures of Elvis.

You ain't seen him yet.

No, I heard all that stuff about "the only thing they can do is shine my shoes and buy my records." I heard all that stuff. And I'm not like "Oh, fuck that, I love Elvis anyway." You know, I'm not coming from that kind of trip. In terms of his whole thing, he was fascinating. You don't like Elvis Presley at all? You don't find him fascinating?

I wish he never died myself, so I wouldn't have to hear about him every single day.

You know what's interesting about Elvis? When he was getting ready to die, Elvis was broke, wearing big platforms and was like a joke in show business. It shows you how fucked up society is, 'cause in the movies they only want happy endings and shit. What happened is, when this man died, that was their happy ending. Elvis was their American dream, the poor boy that got rich and they hated him for it. And then he died and they turned him into this god form. And I think that's fascinating.

Did you ever see him perform?  
No, never

You got all of his movies on tape? Which one is your favorite?

I don't have a favorite Elvis movie. I don't have a favorite Elvis record.

How do you choose a script, Eddie? And why'd you do *Another 48 Hrs.*?

Ultimately, *Another 48 Hrs.* was my idea, and the story that we wrote was under an alias in the movie, because I wrote the story and I didn't want any more bullshit. If they would've seen "Story by Eddie Murphy" and Para-

mount just went through this big thing by Art Buchwald, it would've just given the critics something else smart and snide to say, so I went under an alias on the story credit.

**Did you find that accounting by Paramount very amusing?**

I'm not learning anything from that whole thing by Paramount and Art Buchwald, because I knew that's how they did shit. Everybody that makes films knows that's how they do shit.

**I know, but this was the first time a movie company ever really went public—on public record—[about] the accounting for a movie.**

You know what I thought was amusing was that both parties were trying to make it look like the reason there were no profits was because Eddie Murphy got paid so much money. That was funny. Stupid shit like that. Like how many people work for me, or what car I drive. It's like I'm the only actor in Hollywood that has a Ferrari. There's lots of actors in Hollywood that have much better deals than me and drive nicer cars than me and have more money and all that shit but I was the whipping boy.

**Well, how could it be that the white boys in Hollywood are making more money than you but they have not made films that have grossed over two billion dollars?**

I got into a multipicture deal with Paramount and I owe them "X" amount of pictures for "X" amount of money. And what happens is, I can renegotiate, but ultimately Paramount can say, "Look motherfucker, we got a deal so get the fuck out of our office, you can't go and say I want blank and blank." When I made my deal with Paramount, it was a good deal at the time, you know. So I'm not sitting around crying and shit. But I know when I finish my two pictures I'll be in the open market. But I can't come up with no idea for no movie. I'm not a very disciplined writer. I'm good with conceptualizing but I'm not good at writing scripts and shit. And I also don't like the process. I like to perform and be an actor, I don't like all that other shit that y'all do. Y'all can have it, and you do it wonderfully. But if you're on the open market, you've got all these studios and it's a wealth of talent you can go to. But Paramount ain't slavin' me off and shit. But I could be in a lot better position than I am now.

**How is your relationship with Paramount?**

It's cool, it's cool.

**One of the biggest philosophical differences that we probably have, Eddie, is what you can do and what you can't do. I've read several times that you've answered me saying, "I can't tell Paramount what to do, it's their house." Now it's my opinion that, if anybody brings them two billion dollars—**

I agree. I agree.

**Then it's your house also.**

I heard what you said before, and I cannot go into Frank Mancuso's office and say, "Look here Frank, I'm not doing anything else until you hire some black people."

**If you did that, Eddie, they would have to do it!** No, they wouldn't, they would say, "Get the fuck out of here." They would not do it.

**I'm not going to say which executive, but there's**

**somebody I asked this question to. I said, "If I were on the caliber of Eddie Murphy, on the level of Eddie Murphy, and I went to you and I said, 'Look, motherfucker, tomorrow I want to see ten capable black motherfuckers here at this studio,' what would you do?" And he told me, off the record, "I would have to hire them."**

Yeah, but, 'cause a brother told you that, that means it's true?

**Sometimes I think you underestimate the power that you have.**

I have made personal demands, and they say, "No, Ed, we're not doing it." So how can I go in there and say, "I said, you are going to hire these people!" They would say, "Get the fuck out of here."

**They got no black people there?**

If I weren't in a position where I owed Paramount Pic

**week later and said they hired four more black people just because of what I said in the fuckin' L.A. Times! Because they're sensitive, because the shit was in the press, in the media.**

Black people hire black people at Paramount. Because I've hired a lot of black people in my company, you know, so, give me a title

**All departments—marketing, distribution. I ask Tom Pollack this all the time. We were lucky they just hired a black woman in publicity. He says, "You're right. We have no black people here. We're trying to develop a program"—or something. Those days of saying you can't find any qualified black people are over. You just present him with a stack of resumes—boom. Start interviewing motherfuckers. Because if we don't do that, then they're going to keep that shit lilywhite as long as they want to.**



"I have a room with some Elvis pictures in it. I have a room with lots of pictures of Elvis."

tures, I might be able to say, "If you want to be in business with me, then you have to do blank blank-blank."

**But that's the same approach as affirmative action. These companies, they have no contracts with the United States government. If you haven't got a certain amount of black people working on this motherfucker, you ain't getting no government contract.**

But I already have a contract with the studio, I owe them two pictures. Ultimately they can say, "Get the fuck out of our studio, you owe us two pictures." Ultimately they can do that.

**If there are to be any changes though, I think that the only way we would do it is with people like yourself, me, and Bill Cosby—use the little clout that we can. Because they ain't gonna do it on their own, will they? Let me give an example. There was an article about agents in the L.A. Times, and they asked me how come I didn't have an agent, and on and on. And I said, "I went down to CAA the other day and there was one black agent, that's it." And three people called me a**

See, I don't want to take the position—I'm sensitive to the issue too. I'm just sayin' it ain't easy as that. It's easy to say, "Well, he's in a position to do that," and then say, "Well, why isn't he doing this and that?"

**I know what you're talking about Eddie. I know it's even more so in your case. But people look at me like I'm the black—every young black filmmaker in America writes me every single day wanting me to give them the secret of how to be a filmmaker. That burden shouldn't be put on me, you, or any individual.**

Here's what the deal is more than anything. I know because of the level of my celebrity that I have been forced—I am being forced—to be a politician in a manner of speaking. And what happens, although I know I have a responsibility politically, ultimately I am an entertainer, I am an artist first and foremost. And you accept the responsibility, but the artist part of you resents the fact that they don't just give you the freedom to just be an artist. But you can't just look at a script and say, "I want to do that." Every time I do something I gotta go, "What are they gonna think if I do that?" It becomes this big giant—

*and gotta*



You know what you're talking about, Eddie? That's the dilemma that black artists are in, because we've dogged out in the media for so long that people become so sensitive that they want every image of black people, whether it be a book or play or movie, to be a hundred percent angelic, a hundred percent positive, but that isn't truthful. I get that all the time: "Spike, how come you never have any positive black people in your movie? People on the corner pissing and cursing and using profanity—don't you know we have black doctors and lawyers—"

Do people say that to you?

All the time.

I've never read that in the press from white critics. They always praise you.

No, that is not true, Eddie. They don't always praise me. Before *Do The Right Thing* came out, they wanted to hang me. They said, "That movie is going to cause ten million Afro-Americans to go berserk and riot all across the country. They had my ass on fuckin' *Nightline*, the night the movie opened.

Let me get a good way of putting it. If I had done your movies—you got pretty positive reviews on the first movie—

*She's Gotta Have It*. So-so on *School Daze*. The beat for *Do The Right Thing*.

Now if I had done the movie, me, do you think I would—it would—have gotten positive reviews? The exact same picture?

That being your first film ever, or being Eddie Murphy?

Me being Eddie Murphy and doing that movie.

I think you would have.

See, they would have attacked all the negative stuff in the movie as opposed to the filmmaker: "Spike, you're just perpetuating the myth that all black women want to do is fuck." That's what they would have said to me if I had done the movie.

They said that shit to me anyway, Eddie!

There wouldn't have been no good reviews. What's happened with me is what you said a little while ago. They haven't had a white heavyweight champion in years, the most popular person in music is black, and the I'm in the position I'm in—they can't stand that. They can't. So what they do is they come at me any way they can possibly come at me. Then on top of that you get these black people, it seems like they turn on you.

People do turn. I remember the night that you came to see *She's Gotta Have It*, because at Cinema Studio we saved the whole row. Eddie, this is a good thing that we're talking about, because remember the time I said I wanted to get a group of us all together, and it never happened? I said, "Let's get me, you, Michael Jordan, Mike Tyson, Magic Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis, you know, people like that, people of that caliber, all the young brothers out here doing something, and try to collectively do something." I think that would be a tremendous thing.

Even if we didn't do anything, I think it would be—

Because I think black people aren't the most unified people on the face of the earth. We gotta get everybody's schedule together.

Everybody says it's cool, but the shit doesn't ever come. You got these different camps. Our people, like you said, are the most divided race of people on the face of the earth. But that's something that was done to us. It's something that's inherent, from back when we were slaves, where they'd see a group of people, slaves together, they would break that shit up. Now when a black person gets a little something, they shoot off in the corner and say, "This is mine. Back the fuck up." We are so afraid of losing our shit that the idea of getting together is scary. It's inherent, it's not even something you're doing consciously.

**"Now that's a helluva thing. Me, Mike Tyson, and Don King sitting in my own office whispering about the white man. I said, 'Yo, man, they have done such a thing on us that we whispering and he ain't even here.'"**

This is how scared white people have black people. I was sitting in my office with Mike Tyson and Don King—my office, at Eddie Murphy Productions. The only two people that work there that are white are my managers that work for me. And we got on the subject of white people, and the government, and shit like that, and what happened is, we started whispering, "The white man..." They got you so scared you whisper in your own house about that motherfucker.

Now that's a helluva thing. Me, Mike Tyson, and Don King, sitting in my own office whispering about the white man. I said, "Yo, man, they have done such a thing on us that we whispering and he ain't even here." And that's just something that's in you naturally—what the fuck is up? And you don't know when they're listening or when they gonna get you. So what happens is black people reach a certain level of success and what happens is you get your own little group around you, your own people around you, and you start to live this xenophobic existence. You are cut off from the rest of society and you have your own little world and the idea of sacrificing that is scary to a lot of people, 'cause a lot of people aren't in the position where they can bounce back if they lost all that shit. The scariest thing about you to me is—and the scariest thing is the thing I admire most about you—is that every black person who really stood up and said, "Fuck it, I'm about this," got dissed, killed, fucked over—everybody, from Dr. King to Ali, you know? It's like, they fuck you over and shit, so my thing is, I commend you on that—that you say, "This is what my shit is about, you know?" My politics are much more covert. I am very black and I have a very strong black consciousness but I am about gradual change and dialogue that is much more civil.

Then what's my approach, Eddie?

Fuck this shit, fight it, kiss my ass and I don't give a fuck and fuck you, I'm like, goddamn, go ahead, brother.

We should make our list and divide that shit in

half and start calling brothers. Serious.

If me and you were the only ones there, that'd be better.

Some people will show.

First of all, the people that are movers and shakers—young, black, strong, smart—I don't know, man, that fear shit is in there, 'cause I'm bound to go—

That'd be good, Eddie—to just talk about that shit, though. We don't have to announce that shit, we could take this out of the interview. But just get everybody together—Las Vegas, three-day weekend retreat. And say, "Look, we are young black men, young black males." Our chance of living beyond the age of 25 is some crazy percentage. All of us who are on drugs, who got AIDS, who dropped out of high school, who are giving sisters babies left and right, we have a disability. And me, you, Michael Jordan, Mike Tyson, Magic—that's gonna be crazy. It would take a sacrifice—that's the word—because motherfuckers are gonna be like, "Well, I got a movie to shoot," or, "Well, we're going into training camp." I want to be positive and say that the people who are really down will make the sacrifice, because this is the time to do it. Motherfuckers, little kids shooting Uzis and shit, 15 years old, that shit is crazy. Eddie, you were born in the wonderful borough of Brooklyn, New York. I know a lot of that is in *Delirious*. In Greenpoint Hospital in Brooklyn.

"You want some ice cream? You're on the welfare, you can't afford it." What age did you move to Long Island?

When I was ten.

So you lived in East New York?

I had to stay on the block, you know. I was only a kid so I don't have much memory. I can tell you about that sidewalk on that block, but that's about it. The sidewalk was cracked in front of Bobo's house, but there ain't much to talk about.

We'll go on to the next question. What film do you think you've done your best work in?

*Coming to America*. As an actor, yeah, I think so. There's a scene in that movie—I read a review of the picture where they go, "There's a scene in the movie that is so confusing. Eddie Murphy is playing four characters in a barber shop and it gets so confusing you don't know who he's playing or if he's playing any at all." It's like, you cocksucker. You told me I was gettin' so busy you didn't know who the fuck I was doing in the scene, and they tried to make it like it was an insult.

Eddie, you, Bob DeNiro, myself, and Little Stevie sponsored this thing—United Artists Against Apartheid benefit for Nelson Mandela—it was great, we were right there when Mandela walked in. And you were the first person he saw, and he walked up to you and he hugged you, and he said, "Eddie, you have given me many laughs in prison." That, to me, is gonna be the greatest compliment you'll ever receive. Mandela was in prison for 27 years and your films—your comedy, made it easier for him to endure his imprisonment. You make people laugh. This is a great talent. Comedy is needed.

That's why my politics have to be different from your

continued on page 97

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO REVEREND AL

**The Reverend Al Sharpton has been labeled everything from visionary political activist to hustler. SPIKE LEE talks to America's most controversial black leader.**

When I first heard of and then saw the Reverend Al Sharpton, I was suspicious. What was it? To tell you the truth, it was his doo. What righteous, progressive *black* Afrocentric man is gonna wear his hair like that? I just didn't trust him. That was before, this is now. The Reverend Al Sharpton is one of the few African-American leaders who's out dealing everyday. A lot of Negroes try to distance themselves from Reverend Al. Read this interview and you'll forget about his doo, just like I did.

**SPIKE: Say something about how you became an activist.**

**SHARPTON:** I first started as a boy preacher in Brooklyn, a place called Washington Temple. I was 4 when I did my first sermon. I was born in Brooklyn.

**I thought you were from the South.**

No. My mother's from Alabama and my father's from Florida.

**Yeah, my father's from Alabama.**

I started preachin' regularly when I was 9, and I was one of the Washington Temple gospel singers. Mahalia Jackson came through and said, "Let me take this kid on the road. It would be a good thing." So I used to do 20 minutes, from the time I was 9 until I was 10, and that's when I met Martin Luther King. When I came home, at 10, my parents had separated. By that time we had moved to Hollis, Queens. When they separated, it was a hard time for my mother and my sister. So really I preached to support the family for a while. I went to Tilden High School. When I was about 12, I became totally mesmerized by Adam Clayton Powell on television. So I convinced my mother to let me ride the train to see my sister in Harlem. In those days, Brooklyn kids didn't go to Harlem and vice versa. I mean, Brooklyn parents were like, "It's dangerous in Harlem." Harlem parents were like, "It's dangerous in Brooklyn." I'm talking like the '60s. But I'd go up every time he was here in town and I got to know him. It got to be where he would call when he was coming to town and I'd ride with him and all that. So I guess I was always attracted to controversial figures. And then Adam got sick by the time I was 14, and I became serious about being an activist, so I joined Operation Breadbasket. And Jesse Jackson appointed me youth director in New York. I held that 'til '88, right after Howard Beach, and then started UAM [United Afri-



can Movement].

One of the comments that people bring up a lot about *Do The Right Thing* is the graffiti on the wall that says, "Tawana told the truth," and people are like, "Spike, do you really think Tawana told the truth?" Now, are we ever gonna find out what the truth is? Because I do feel there's no way in the world that anyone 15 years old is gonna knock herself on the head, put feces all around her body, throw herself in a ditch, and then claim somebody else did it. We know the strategy that you chose, but is there ever any way that we can know the truth?

Three-part answer: One: We've been in civil court for the last eight months. A restraining order was obtained by who we accused for going. So he's not gonna testify, which is strange. The guy says she was lyin' and then says he doesn't want to testify. We were going to use the civil court proceeding as a way of her coming out and telling her story. When I got involved with Tawana, we had come out of Howard Beach. Maddox called me and told me about a situation with a young girl. She wanted me 'cause she saw me on an old Morton Downey, Jr., show. I went to talk to Tawana. I believed Tawana from the beginning. Now, as I tell the press all the time, I'm not a private investigator. I wasn't there when Yusef Hawkins got murdered. I wasn't there when Howard Beach happened. I can only go by what I feel. I can only go by what I feel. I can also only go by the issue of the state of New York. They never told the truth. So if I have to choose between a little girl, and a state that said Eleanor Bumpers was at fault or Michael Stewart was at fault, I say, "They're gonna lie about Tawana Brawley too." So there's every reasonable reason to say [Attorney General Robert] Abrams manipulated the grand jury. He manipulated me. That was just proof. And if he couldn't get 1 count out of 67 on me—why would anyone manipulate the grand jury about Tawana? Tawana identified certain people that we named, who admitted they were on that road at that time, but they were spending the four days lifting weights and had no witnesses. She'd never have to open her mouth if she were a white lady. And we respect white ladies in America.

**If a black person is in Bensonhurst then he must be up to no good anyway, right?**  
Absolutely. And if he wasn't up to no good, prove it.

**Why is the Central Park jogger case different from Tawana Brawley's?**

It is a matter of race—the differences hinge on the issue of race. In the Central Park case you have young black males on trial who have not been identified by anyone and who have no physical evidence against them. There is no evidence of vaginal injury to the victim and statements by youngsters that were coerced. With Tawana however, there were no mere accusations against anyone. There was an identified defendant and yet that case took 8 months to come to trial, plenty of time for the accused to have a perfect alibi. Further, if I had said that Tawana had no memory of the entire incident I would have been nailed to the wall. I find it interesting and amazing that no kind of medical device has been suggested or found that can be used to help restore the Central Park jogger's memory and that everyone merely accepts that she will never be able to remember what happened nor be able to identify who did this. . .

I do not condone what happened to this woman in any way whatsoever. I find the crimes committed savage. However, I find it equally as savage to have a

group of young black men hung because they are black, and were simply in Central Park the night of the crime. That is savage.

**So let's go back over this. What is the present status of the Tawana Brawley case?**

The civil court in Poughkeepsie, New York. We're being sued by Steven Pagones, who's one of the men that we accused of being involved in the attack on Tawana. We're being sued for something like \$900 million dollars. And once it got to court, we said, "Fine, we want to depose him and we will bring Tawana in." He got a restraining order that he not be deposed first. So there are arguments that that will be resolved in the next few months. I think it will be resolved and hit the fan probably about mid or late fall of this year. A lot of it was waiting on my trial to be over because I think a lot of them would have preferred to try the convicted.

**Is she ever gonna be the same—or is her life permanently damaged?**

I didn't know Tawana well before it happened, but there's a—you know, from all her relatives—there's a marked difference. Tawana has a way of sittin' in the room with you, and you can feel she's somewhere else. I don't think that she'll ever be the same. I think it was

**"Tawana wanted me 'cause she saw me on an old Morton Downey, Jr., show. I went to talk to her. I believed Tawana from the beginning. I can only go by what I feel."**

traumatic. I don't know what happened, but the reaction... What 15-year-old kid wants to be called a hoax all over the world? She's been in many ways comforted, but a lot of people still turned their backs on her

**You know, you could run for mayor of Bensonhurst. Tell us about marching through Bensonhurst. Did you see that documentary *Seven Days in Bensonhurst* on PBS's *Frontline* that Shelby Steele did? You came off looking very good in that.**

He took a lot of flack, I think. He was fair. Very conservative. He and I are not the kind of guys that would agree on much, but I think he dealt with his hand out. I've never said this in public. Yusef Hawkins' father calls the day after. It happened after nine o'clock that night. Next morning, five o'clock in the morning, WLJB calls me, and asks me to comment on the boy getting killed. I didn't know who they were talking about. I was asleep. So I get up and find out what's happening. By that time, eleven o'clock, I get a call, guy says his name is Moses Stewart, wants to talk to me. I said, "Who is Moses Stewart?" He says he is Yusef Hawkins' father. Ends up, I get on the phone, he tells me that the press will bother me when I come out to the house. I went out to the house. He asks me would I advise the family. He wanted me to do what I did with Tawana. So I said, "First of all, let me tell you something. If I'm involved there'll be a lot of controversy; one. Two, I don't feel that because the family's a victim, that activists necessarily know what to do. So if I'm gonna get involved, you gotta let me do what I feel is right. Though I will discuss everything with you before I do it." We went through the whole long day and didn't find

any problem. Then Dunkins shows up and they curse him out, saying they didn't want him involved. Which I felt was not the thing to do politically so I kept that under wraps, at that time. Because I didn't want to help [former New York Mayor] Koch, who was also on the phone, fuming about "get Al Sharpton out of the house." And they wouldn't let Koch in 'cause I was in the house. My thing was, I sat out in that house and watched TV, and they start talking about the girl, Gina—

**Feliciano.**

—and the whole love triangle business. And I said to Moses Stewart—I never told this before—I said, "You know something? If we don't make a move by the weekend, they're gonna have this as a love triangle. Racism will be out of this. And that's the end of the story." And he said, "Well, what move do you wanna make?" I said, "I know what I wanna do. Just play along with me." I went to the Slave Theatre that night. We have meetings every Wednesday and Saturday. I'm not the one to march against it. I knew that marching against this was going to really raise racism in the community, but I also knew it would clarify what killed Yusef Hawkins. So that's when we decided to make the first march. We got out there with about 600 or 700 people. I saw hundreds of white people with signs and watermelons and I said, "Bingo. This will clear up for America that it was racism and these kids have been trained to be racists." We start marching for the first two blocks and I bet this was the first time in my life I really thought we were going to die out there. I never saw before, and maybe one time after that, so much hate. There was actually a wedding going on where they broke up the wedding, and the bride, groom, and the whole bridal party came to the street and started screaming "nigger." These were people in love, making their vows, and they stopped their vows to God to go—it was amazing. I kept saying, if we live through this, we'll clarify the issue, and sure enough we did. The next night, preachers came out and they did the same thing to them. Bensonhurst, I think, was the thing that clearly brought Northern racism to the dinner table of America, where they had to deal with it, because even with Howard Beach they were trying to say the guy shouldn't have run in the parkway, the whole nine yards. Here was a clear-cut racial murder. What excuses do they have with Yusef? There was no knife, there was no graffiti, there was no hoax. Even with an outright racial murder [Bensonhurst, where one defendant was acquitted] the system hasn't proven that it is going to work for black people.

**What do you call a black man with a Ph.D.? Nigger.**

And we're trying to get a grand jury to indict them. Everybody's going in circles, like outside agitators. The hell with it, man, the kid got shot in the back. Here we are in the 1990s, and there is still very little premium on black life. I mean, the picture that a lot of people see and that I see are just different. I look at black life, real black life, as worthless, you can still get shot and nobody is going to pay. Our culture is not respected. James Brown sat up in jail, the biggest cultural insult to a race that has ever happened—that would not happen to anyone else. It's a matter of how deep black you can become or make yourself a part of the white culture, which means again that's another form of murder for us and it's insane. If a politician wants to succeed, he's gotta become a crossover politician. He's gotta be the James Brown or Lionel Richie of politics. In the '60s, when I first got in the movement, I would never

continued on page 90

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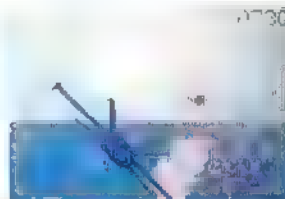
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# THE NEW BLACK CINEMA

Is There Life After *Shaft*? DONALD BOGLE reports.

**F**our years ago a "little" picture called *She's Gotta Have It* opened quietly in theaters—and then just about stood the movie industry on its ear. Cheaply made, quickly but beautifully shot, clever, imaginative, and fired up with the joy of moviemaking itself, this romantic comedy turned into a bona fide hit. It let out a mighty roar that not only launched the career of its young director, Spike Lee, but also altered the American film industry's tired notions about the appeal of black movies and their ability to reach a new audience in a fresh and sometimes powerful way. American movies have not been the same since.

Today a whole lineup of black filmmakers, such as Robert Townsend, Charles Lane, Euzhan Palcy, Keenen Ivory Wayans, Charles Burnett, James Bond III, Reginald Hudlin, and even star-turned-director Eddie Murphy, is changing the look and feel of American motion pictures. From *She's Gotta Have It*, *Hollywood Shuffle*, and *School Daze* to *House Party*, *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka*, *To Sleep With Anger*, and *Mo' Better Blues*, movies made by black filmmakers have been reaching a fresh audience with a new language and range of subjects and cultural references that can drive a young black audience delirious with pleasure—and sometimes leave a white audience and the white critical establishment baffled and feeling out of it. Often shot on tight budgets and frequently starring their directors, some of the new films are solid achievements. Others aren't. But all, even those films that go nutty or haywire, have the brazen daring of filmmakers determined to speak in their own voices and to address their audience from a distinctly African American perspective.

Of course, black movies are not that new. From the days of silent films through the '30s and '40s, African-American directors such as Oscar Micheaux and Spencer Williams turned out "race movies"—black-cast films produced especially for the black audience. In the late '60s and '70s, black directors Gordon Parks, Sr., Melvin Van Peebles, Gordon Parks, Jr., and Michael Schultz released movies such as *The Learning Tree*, *Shaft*, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, *Super Fly*, and *Cooley High*, which, although sometimes controversial, frequently picked up on black anger and dissent while answering their audiences' hunger for strong, assertive, and defiant black movie heroes.

**D**uring most of the '80s, the African American audience found itself shamelessly ignored. This was the period when the film industry was stricken by crossover fever. Certain black performers starred in big-budget movies guaranteed to please and reassure—though rarely challenge—a large white audience. *Night Hawks*, *48 Hrs.*, *Beverly Hills Cop* I and II, and *Lethal Weapon* I and II provided us with many an entertaining moment. It was often hard to resist them. Yet they also left many black moviegoers feeling frustrated.

Here were films that seemed hell-bent on glamorizing and spotlighting a favorite fantasy of the Reagan era: roving teams of white/black bonded buddies, who together endure a series of harrowing experiences, un-

**The subtext of many Reagan-era movies was that all was fine and dandy between the races, that racism had vanished, and that significant cultural distinctions and differences could be glossed over because they were just about nonexistent.**

dergoing one heady manhood test after another, and of course, surviving not only to save the day but one another as well. Neutralized in those films was any significant idea of black anger or discontent. Something else also seemed to be neutralized, black male sexuality. Often enough, the black star was a glorified sidekick and only rarely did he end up with the girl.

But worst—and perhaps most important to understanding the effects of this new movement in films—those movies seldom presented their black characters in a cultural context or setting through which the black audience might identify with them. In *48 Hrs.*, when Eddie Murphy as Reggie Hammond was sprung loose from the slammer to help the white cop Cates (played by Nick Nolte) catch a pair of vicious killers, many of us wondered why—if Reggie were really as horny and raunchy as he kept saying—he had to prow around in search of a woman. Wasn't there an old girlfriend or wife somewhere he could have hooked up with? And didn't he have some friends or family somewhere? Murphy himself dazzled us with braggadocio and energy. But even in a world of simplified pop images, Reggie seemed to come out of a cultural vacuum. Basically, the subtext of many Reagan-era movies was that all was fine and dandy between the races, that racism had vanished, and that significant cultural distinctions and differences could be glossed over because they were just about nonexistent.

**C**ultural distinctions and demarcations are precisely what the new movies are about. They showcase the lifestyles, trends, attitudes, and social interplay of a segment of black America as it nears the end of the 20th century.

Wasn't that much of the pleasure of trailblazers like *She's Gotta Have It* and *Hollywood Shuffle*—the worlds in which they presented their characters and stories? In the former, the opening credits themselves—shots of Brooklyn with black faces everywhere—grounded the audience immediately within a community: a time, a place, a point of view.

Straightforward and uncomplicated, *She's Gotta*

*Have It* showed its audience—for the first time in American movies—a relaxed portrait of young urban African-Americans trying to sort out the messy business of love and romance. Here were people who, unlike those black characters we had seen so much of on television, did not strut, pose, and posture—overdoing their dialects or overplaying their attitudes so we wouldn't forget they were black. Instead their cultural bearings and references flowed effortlessly from them, cueing us in to the community from which they had come.

Just the way *She's Gotta Have It*'s actress Tracy Camilla Johns (as Nola Darling) looked said something to us. Here was a dazzler of a black woman whose type of beauty—her full sensual lips, her dreamy dark eyes, her natural hair—we had seen everywhere but in the movies. For many African-American women, the look of Nola (coupled with her intelligence and confidence) was what they identified with.

Then, too, the film's very style—the director's decision to abandon traditional narrative structure, to have his characters look straight-on at the camera and introduce themselves and explain their dilemmas—



Gordon Parks, Sr., has inspired many new black filmmakers.

gave it a free-form, seemingly improvisatory edge that enhanced its simplicity and directness.

Part of the appeal of director Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* also lay in its jaunty and limber style. In recording the story of a young black actor's struggles to find work in Hollywood, Townsend created a series of loosely connected skits that added up to an often incisive look at the film industry. With his black acting academy (specializing in teaching black actors how to play servants) and his white casting agents who tell black actors how to act black, Townsend slashed away at all the fake black pimps, whores,



butlers, and countless other black stereotypes that have paraded across movie screens for decades. Townsend shrewdly articulated what so many in the black audience had long felt: that something was desperately wrong with the type of popular movie entertainment we've seen.

The impact of Hollywood's black images also lies at the core of writer/director Keenen Ivory Wayans's *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka*, an affectionate parody of the '70s "blaxploitation" movies, which featured Wayans and a trio of macho heroes from the past: Jim Brown, Bernie Casey, and Isaac Hayes. With varying degrees of success, *Sucka* poked fun at those movie images from the past. Some older audiences liked the idea that the movie recaptured the experience of seeing "blaxploitation" films. People who, like Wayans, grew up on them liked their screwball energy and dopey but healthy assertiveness. And at times *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka* did uncork some of the absurdities and wild unexpected joys of those earlier films.

But few of the new-style late '80s films hit more of a nerve with young African-American audiences than Spike Lee's 1988 *School Daze*. Blasted or dismissed by the critics and admittedly not a perfect film, *School Daze* chronicled the conflicts and activities of a group of black students on the campus of fictional Mission College.

The film rips into a range of subjects and issues, fraternity life as a jarring, divisive force within the black college community and the crazed politics of black colleges. *School Daze* rushes along at such a fast clip that it doesn't seem to have time to sort out all its issues. Yet African-American audiences discuss and debate it because it's the only movie of its kind to touch, with urgency and candor, on aspects of a uniquely black college experience. And perhaps most striking is the fact that *School Daze* is so uncompromising, never once setting up a scene with a white audience in mind. It's almost as if white people don't exist.

A whole other type of satire, as well as a comment on a contemporary social issue, emerges in director Charles Lane's first feature, *Sidewalk Stories*. Working with a budget of \$200,000, Lane shot his black-and-white silent film in some 15 days in New York City, filming mostly outside in bitter cold weather to save expenses. *Sidewalk Stories* returns to the basic elements of cinema. It tells a simple story in purely visual terms.

Some of the more recent black films seem headed away from satire and parody, toward pure escapism, such as James Bond III's *Def by Temptation*—a sometimes sexy and sometimes stylish horror story shot by African-American cinematographer Ernest Dickerson—and Reginald Hudlin's *House Party*.

There are no psychological statements in *House Party*. It is purely a teen movie that hopes to entertain by capturing the energies and yearnings of middle-class African-American teenagers. The screen explodes with the latest music, dance styles, dress styles, and hairstyles (hero Kid wears a flattop haircut that leads a cop to call him Eraserhead), all strictly from a teen point of view.

Other recent films, such as Charles Burnett's *Tb Sleep With Anger* and Wendell Harris's *Chameleon Street*, have explored more adult and less commercial themes. An independent filmmaker since the '70s, Burnett's earlier films *Killer of Sheep* and *My Brother's Wedding* have long had admirers here and abroad but have not been shown much beyond the festival circuit. *Tb Sleep With Anger* (which was at this year's New York Film Festival), may change that.

Nowhere is the impact of these films on conventional Hollywood products more apparent than in the changes Eddie Murphy's movies—and his image—have undergone. After rising to stardom in black/white buddy comedies and action movies, Murphy seems to have been affected (more so than he might admit) by the success of Spike Lee—and Lee's reputation within the African-American community as an artist with a political consciousness and a determination to make films the African-American audience can connect with. Lately, Murphy has appeared to exert more control over his films.

The results have been mixed. The "personal" concert movie *Eddie Murphy Raw*, written by Murphy with Keenen Ivory Wayans and directed by Robert Townsend, had occasional flashes of humor but struck many as a mean-spirited piece of work in which his obsessions and fears (of women, gays, and ethnic groups), surfaced in a sometimes disturbing way.

More successful was *Coming to America*, a romantic comedy about an African prince from a mythical kingdom who journeys to America in search of a bride. Its portrait of Africa was more old-style Hollywood fairy tale than new-style African-American consciousness. But Murphy's comic energies were on target. The audience clearly liked seeing Murphy—at long last—as a romantic hero and also—at long last—interacting with other black performers on screen. Despite its flaws, *Coming to America* was filmed with a black audience in mind.

The same could be said of the recent and far less successful *Harlem Nights*, which teamed Murphy and Richard Pryor as two smoothies who run a Harlem nightclub in the late 1930s. Unfortunately, *Harlem Nights* was little more than a formula Hollywood gangster movie, which despite the elaborate sets, cars, and costumes, and a soundtrack with music by Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday, failed to evoke any real feeling for historical Harlem's jazzy energy, its sexy, glamorous internal rhythms, or its inhabitants' elegant and sleek style.

But the film's most disturbing failing may be its inability to create vibrant characters and his blatantly stereotypical view of women. As a treacherous vamp, the lovely Jasmine Guy is killed off quickly in a foul and grisly sequence that reveals little more than its creator's misogyny. And poor Della Reese, while very funny, ends up defeminized and coarsened. Not only does she curse up a storm, but she has to duke it out with Murphy and gets herself shot in the foot. The other women (especially the prostitute Sunshine) seem

notable primarily for their sexual prowess.

This said, why then did the film succeed to a moderate degree with black audiences? The answer is simple: the enthusiasm and energy of its cast. Here Richard Pryor (looking fitter than he has in years), Redd Foxx, and Della Reese seemed revved up with the joy of playing off one another's lines.

Of course, the throwaway women in a movie like *Harlem Nights* point up a pivotal weakness of many of the other new black films. It is still hard to find an exciting and fully developed African-American woman on screen. And the sad and indisputable fact is that while there are young black female directors such as Debbie Allen, Neema Barnett, Julie Dash, and Michelle Parkerson working (mostly on television), only one black woman has had success as a feature film director: Euzhan Palcy, who now lives in Paris. A highly skilled director from Martinique, Palcy's two films are infused with a fierce socio-political consciousness. In *Sugar Cane Alley*, which brought her international attention in 1983, she examined the life of a young boy in the French colonial Martinique of the '30s. In her recent *A Dry White Season*, she directed an international cast—Marlon Brando, Donald Sutherland, Zakes Mokae, Susan Sarandon—in a drama that uncovered the poisons and brutalities of apartheid in South Africa. Hers is clearly a career to watch.

Of the current African-American directors, Spike Lee remains the most important and manages to break new ground and touch raw emotion with each film. The extraordinary impact of *Do the Right Thing* on African-American audiences was due in part to the skillful and seamless way it captured urban rhythms and textures, tensions, and attitudes, using music, speech, humor, and color as potent signs of cultural energies, shifts, and unrest. Most importantly, it did the very thing Hollywood movies had avoided in the '80s. It confronted the issue of race and American racism head on, refusing to pull punches or to let itself go slack with an ending that in any way seemed conciliatory. Interestingly, it also showed that a film from a distinct African-American perspective could pull in white viewers without compromising itself.

Lee's recent *Mo' Better Blues* is so different from *Do the Right Thing* that it may catch many people off guard. It's a look at a young jazz trumpeter (Denzel Washington) dedicated to his music to the point that he can commit to nothing else, including the two beautiful young women who vie for his attention. Its hero, Bleek, may well be destroyed by the very thing he loves most, his trumpet. Yet unlike such jazz films as *Bird* or *'Round Midnight*, we don't feel trapped in some humorless, dark forbidding world. And we have a community of African-Americans, not an isolated black man nurtured by some dear white friend.

That's only part of what *Mo' Better Blues* does. Mainly, it's a dazzling big picture, wonderfully shot by Ernest Dickerson with long and sensuous takes—a movie-movie that throbs with romance, charm, and star power.

*Mo' Better Blues* evokes the glamour of show business, the sexy allure of romance, the surprising bonds of friendship that tie and hurt us, and the whole cycle of renewal and regeneration that can make it all worthwhile. And, of course, it is the romantic, glamorous aspect of the film that may surprise many viewers.

Most of these films introduce a new aesthetic and a fresh perspective. Some might see this as just the latest in a new Hollywood trend. Let's hope, though, that it's the start of a new reality in American pictures—movies that touch base with an audience while also altering their expectations and challenging their assumptions.



Melvin Van Peebles broke ground with blaxploitation films.

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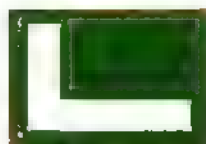






# living coloured and proud

The band and their new album, brought to you  
by LISA JONES, an original black-rock groupie.



Living Colour are not a strange act of immaculate conception between a god called rock and a mother Mary called rhythm and blues. They are yet another chapter in the long history of aesthetic guerrilla warfare that began with the freedom songs sung by African slaves in the fields and has continued through James Brown's "Say it Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud," Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," Little Willie John's "Fever," Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode," Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come," Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On," Jimi Hendrix's "Bold as Love," the Isley Brothers' "Who's That Lady (Part One)," Stevie Wonder's "Living For the City," Bootsy Collins's "Fat Cat," Was Not Was's "Out Come the Freaks" (the slow version), Prince's "Uptown," Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message," and Fishbone's "Party At Ground Zero."

Take, for example, a cut on the new album, *Time's Up*, called "Pride," which drummer William Calhoun says is about "how other people can relate to you as an entertainer, but because of race not as a human being." The song doesn't once mention the words black or white (as does none of Living Colour's recorded material so far). It's rockable or danceable (rock vs. soul semantics again); it's also an artfully spoon-fed sociology lesson ("History's a lie that they teach you in school," sings vocalist Corey Glover in the perky pop phrasing that laces the band's hard-rock beats with texture and irony).

What I'm trying to say is that Living Colour are not some bald-headed stepchild that the Black Rock Coalition left on the rock establishment's doorstep one glory day in 1988, but offspring born of many years of artistic activity and political struggle by African-Americans—not a new black aesthetic, but part of a continuum old as the African presence here in America.

You've heard the story before: The blues (black music) gives birth to yet another mulatto child, this one is called rock'n'roll. White artists cash in. The industry runs to the bank, and in a brazen act of protectionism crowns Elvis Presley the king. Twenty-odd years later, a black hard-rock band declares itself the rightful heir to the throne and burn-rushes to the bank. Meanwhile, young Americans such as Madonna and young Britons like George Michael remind us once again how history is fond of repeating itself. Of course, shaking fingers at the culture-vultures isn't so easy anymore, given the likes of crossover cling-ons like Whitney Houston and Milli Vanilli. Things just aren't as clear-cut, as black-and-white, anymore. But hey, it's about time. Only in America (and its distant cousin, South Africa) is music-mixing a social taboo rivaled only by miscegenation. In most countries across the globe, musical miscegenation, if you can call it that, is just what makes the beat go 'round. True too in America, but, as we know, the real battle is over turf—he who slices the pie gets the biggest piece.

Back to Living Colour and the living coloured generation. We grew up in white neighborhoods, went to white schools, and we're still not white (and most of us who survived have no desire to be). Or we grew up in black neighborhoods, went to black schools, and we ain't white either. Or maybe we are. Or maybe we're half and half. The point is, the "black experience" is not a uniform genetic code. And artists like Living Colour, in addition to making music, are waging a battle over images. Living Colour are living, breathing testaments to the fact that black Americans don't fit into neat racial packages, though the way

ed, from left: William Calhoun, Corey Glover, Muzz Skillings, and



most blacks are marketed to Wonder Bread America suggests otherwise (Bill Cosby: house Negro; L.L. Cool J: field Negro; NWA: runaway slaves).

It's an interesting time to be young and living coloured. Everyone's wearing their story on their sleeves. Young black men in New York wear Malcolm X medallions and have Batman logos shaven into the backs of their heads. Comely light-complexioned entertainers like Rae Dawn Chong and Paula Abdul ride the black magic-carpet to fame and fortune, but look in the mirror and see anything but black. Rappers from middle-class backgrounds call themselves the Poor Righteous Teachers or the Intelligent Hoodlums or Lakeem Shabazz (and drop black supremacist science while multi-colored but uniformly buck-naked girls wiggle their hips in the background). And a band like Living Colour rides in as the race men of rock'n'roll.

**T**he media is nearly as fond of telling the Living Colour story as it is the Spike Lee story, because, like Spike's joint, it rings with all sorts of Horatio Alger—"up by your bootstraps," "only in America"—truths. I'll be brief: Vernon Reid, Brooklyn native and guitar wunderkind (a "walking encyclopedia of hard rock riffs," one critic has said), worked for years as sideman in important avant-garde melting-pot bands like Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society, James White and the Blacks, and Joe Bowie's Defunkt before forming Living Colour in 1984.

First a power trio, the band eventually added a sing-

Living Colour, clockwise from top left: Muzz Skillings, Vernon Reid, Corey Glover, and William Calhoun.



er By '86, the current lineup was set. Drummer William Calhoun, a Berklee College of Music grad from the Bronx, had worked for Jaco Pastorius, toured with Harry Belafonte, and led his own progressive rock band, Dark Sarcasm. (When he was 16, Calhoun started gigging with guitarist Leonard K. Seeley, an early New York black rocker, and his band Heritage.) Bass player Muzz Skillings, a Queens native and City College grad in music, played reggae, jazz, salsa, and rock in neighborhood bands and led his own cover band, Muz, before hooking up with Reid. (Muzz had taken the test to become a New York City fireman, but abandoned all plans when the band cut its first demo.) Corey Glover, Living Colour's vocalist, is also an actor (his credits include *Platoon*), and did time at Dowling College in Long Island, where he was a radio DJ. (Reid asked Glover to join the band when he heard him sing "Happy Birthday" at a mutual friend's party.)

The same year Reid put together Living Colour, he cofounded the Black Rock Coalition (Its manifesto: "Rock'n'roll is black music and we are its heirs"), which waged a lone preach-in against the color line in rock and pop while promoting the rise of its flagship band, Living Colour, in the New York club scene. Mick Jagger caught the band at CBGB in '87 and recruited Reid for his solo album, *Primitive Cool*, which led to Jagger producing two tracks on the band's demo. After an extended run of demo-shopping, Living Colour was signed by Epic, home of Michael Jackson and son of CBS Records.

*Vivid* was pressed in '88, but didn't really hit until a year after its release, when MTV put the band's "Cult of Personality" video into heavy rotation. MTV probably "prayed for a black rock band," says Living Colour's Skillings, "to take the heat off." Along with the vid play, the band toured like Georgia mules: for most of the two years that followed *Vivid*'s release, the band crisscrossed the States and Europe and toured Japan. In '88, they headlined small clubs and on the college circuit, did an MTV New Music Tour with the Godfathers, and opened for Robert Palmer, Billy Bragg, and Anthrax (and one night for Joan Jett and the Ramones). By '89, they were being featured at European festivals, headlining at 1000- to 2500-seat venues at home, and opening for the Stones on the U.S. dates of the Steel Wheels tour.

National and international sales of *Vivid* quadrupled. It went to Number Six on the pop charts and hit platinum. As if another Berlin Wall had crumbled, critics proclaimed the lifting of rock's color line and shook their heads in amazement. (Peter Watrous of the *New York Times* called Living Colour's success "one of the odder tales in recent music-business history." Hard-won, but not odd, I'd say. Elvis wearing a crown—now that's odd.) Accolades locked in: Best New Artists at the International Rock Awards where the band played Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" before accepting their "Elvis"; Best New American Band—*Rolling Stone's* 1989 Readers Poll; a Grammy for "Cult of Personality." The year before, Calhoun was named Best New Drummer by *Modern Drummer* and Reid was Best Guitarist in *Rolling Stone's* Critic's Poll. The band went to Los Angeles in early '90 to lay down tracks for a second album, *Time's Up*. And that just about brings us up to date.

**SPIN:** In '88, during those first shows outside of New York, I heard you guys were converting people note by note.

**Glover:** Like a revival.

**Calhoun:** It was like a tent show.

**Glover:** For the entire first song, audiences would be very pensive, just staring at us. Halfway through the second song, their faces would change. They'd be like,

"Yeah. I can get into that." We were drawing them in, one person at a time. By the end of the show, there was a modicum of acceptance.

**Skillings:** Whenever we did a load in, right before a soundcheck, without fail—

**Glover:** We waited for this.

**Skillings:** Somebody would come up to us and say "Are you guys a rap band?"

**Calhoun:** No.

**Skillings:** "You guys are a funk band?"

**Calhoun:** No.

**Skillings:** "A dance band?" They'd go down the list: jazz, reggae, calypso. They'd list every conceivable thing before they'd say rock. In fact, they never said rock.

**Calhoun:** It took a while. Especially in Europe. I'll never forget a show we did in Germany early on. There were people there from Austria. They'd driven all the way to the show. For the first song, the audience sat there like "duh." The second song: "uhh" again. We got to the middle of the set, and people still weren't really getting into the music. We ended up doing three encores. After the show we asked people what the deal was. They said they had never seen a band play a reggae song, then a rock song, then a metal song. They were having a hard time figuring out what we were doing.

**Can you talk about some of the uglier moments of breaking "racial barriers"?**

**Glover:** We got the finger in Boston once. We were opening for Big Audio Dynamite. We never got a soundcheck. BAD were taking their time, so we never got one. We were pissed.

**Skillings:** We were fired up from that. We played a really kick-ass show. It was funny because on my end of the stage some folks were vibing. Then there was this guy looking straight faced and giving us the finger. His girlfriend was next to him partying like crazy.

**Glover:** That was why he was giving you the finger.

**Skillings:** I just walked over to the edge of the stage and started playing really hard, but I kept smiling. I was feeling good, like "You can give me the finger but look what I can do! You paid to give me the finger." I turned my back and walked away. When I looked at him later in the show, his finger was down and he was actually into the music, which surprised me.

**Calhoun:** A lot of that is just, "There are some black guys on the stage playing, my girl is grooving, and I can't get next to it." But when they listen to the music and see what the band's all about, they calm down. That happened zillions of times. But what about blacks who come to see us? We've had some black people staring at us like, "What nation are these brothers from?"

**What cities did this happen in?**

**Glover:** New York!

**Calhoun:** D.C., Chicago. It's happened in Europe, the few that showed up. A lot of black people aren't hip to the fact that rock'n'roll is in the black community. They think we're gonna get on stage and moonwalk or play these really hip love songs about how a black girl looks in a red dress and how my Mercedes is so big. Then we start singing about "Open Letter to a Landlord" and "Cult of Personality."


**Glover:** For some people, music is a form of escapism. Especially black popular music. It's divorced from social issues as much as possible. As a black person, you deal with social problems every day, that's what your life is about. But when you listen to music, it's just to make you vegetate. A response we get from some

continued on page 94

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# LIVING FOR THE CITY

Marion Barry, the crack-smoking mayor of the nation's capital, got caught in something more sinister and unjust than a racist conspiracy: the federal government's war on drugs.

JEFFERSON MORLEY compares the woes of D.C.'s mayor to the good life of Miami's cocaine bourgeoisie.



**A**s the news spread on the night of January 18, 1990, that Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr. had been busted on drug charges, a Washington, D.C., radio DJ dropped a phonograph needle into the grooves of Stevie Wonder's rock'n'soul classic of the early 1970s, "Living for the City." Across the chocolate city and her vanilla suburbs came the haunting tale of a bright black boy with a dream.

*"A boy is born / in hardtime Mississippi surrounded by / four walls that ain't so pretty . . ."*

So begins the story of *U.S. v. Marion S. Barry*. Born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, Barry had come to the nation's capital and risen to become its top elected official. Now Barry was under arrest for smoking crack cocaine. By the summer he would be on trial in federal court for 14 counts of possession, conspiracy, and perjury.

"Living for the City" is a song about a boy who overcomes his humble origins and makes his way to the big city. He gets off the Greyhound and finds the city "just like I pictured it. Skyscrapers and everything. . . ." But the newly arrived innocent is waylaid by a hustler who gives him a package to take across the street. The police grab him; the package contains drugs. A judge is heard pronouncing, "*A jury of your peers having found you guilty: ten years*" and a steel jail door slams shut. The chorus comes back one last time: *Living just enough / just enough / for the city.*"

Stevie Wonder's lament is an apt postscript to the trial of Marion Barry, not the least because of its ambivalence: Was Barry an innocent who came up from the South and doomed by the realities of a city he was too naive to understand, or a hustler who seized a chance to deceive his more honest black brethren?

By the time Barry's trial began in June, public discussion about it gravitated around the magnetic poles of racial conspiracy and individual irresponsibility. And that hardy American myth, the truth lies somewhere-in-between, was little consolation. On the subject of Marion Barry, there was no in between.

The mayor's supporters, virtually all of them black, saw his trial as the work of powerful people hostile to the black community. They forgave Barry for using drugs and for lying about it. The mayor was, in the words of Louis Farrakhan, "a repentant soul."

The mayor's critics, many of them white, regarded this support for Barry with amusement, contempt, or impatience. Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* said that the allegation of governmental misconduct should not "obscure what for some is the most important issue: the behavior of Marion S. Barry."

And there the debate usually stalled. Tom Porter,

the news director of a local radio station, WFW FM, and the man who ordered up "Living for the City," said, "The real question we have to ask ourselves is, 'How the hell did we—as black people and as a society—get into this mess?'"

In deceitful times, restate the obvious, suggested George Orwell.

Most obvious was the fact that Marion Barry was on trial for violating drug laws, specifically, cocaine laws. *U.S. v. Marion S. Barry* was a legal proceeding to decide whether the government had the right to impose coercion, i.e., a jail sentence, on a citizen for seeking, using, and lying about crack cocaine. The prosecutors and the police said they were doing their sworn duty as directed by the executive branch. Many black people did not believe them, but even these skeptics could not dispute that the prosecutors had acted largely in accordance with federal drug policy. This policy stresses prosecuting the cocaine industry, and in recent years, recreational cocaine users. The trial of Marion Barry was one battle in the so-called "war on drugs."

Indeed, the Barry affair exemplified the drug problem, at least as it is often covered in the national press: the self-destructive behavior of a promiscuous black male. The Barry affair also defined the drug war as waged by the executive branch—its priorities, its methods, and its purpose.

The priority was the black leader of Washington, D.C. The method was to supply crack cocaine to a person with a drug problem, and then arrest him. The purpose was to give the city a new political leadership.

"You may have the emergence of the kind of political leadership that can focus on and confront the problem of drug abuse," said Jay Stephens, the chief federal prosecutor, after Barry's arrest. Stephens also said he would plea-bargain with Barry on the condition that he resign.

Were the media and the government acting unfairly? To answer that question, you have to compare the efforts of national reporters and drug warriors in Washington with their efforts in another major American city, often said to symbolize the nation's drug problem: Miami.

**I**n 1974, the swank Miami suburb now known as Cocoplum was an unnamed mangrove swamp dotted with pine trees and inhabited only by birds and an occasional red fox. During the cocaine boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Cocoplum was the scene of busy construction. Now, as the *Miami Vice* era gives way to fin de siècle, Cocoplum has more than 100 private homes—many of them worth more than \$1 million—a private club, and a hidden camera aimed at the license plate of every incoming vehicle. So many world-class drug entrepreneurs live or have lived in Cocoplum that federal drug agents call the neighborhood "Cocaine Plum."

One indicted smuggler, now a fugitive, built a million-dollar spread here and paid for virtually the whole thing with \$100 bills. Four doors down the street, another cocaine kingpin put a disco in his basement and hung a \$250,000 chandelier in the front hall.

Cocoplum is a mecca for what one federal prosecutor calls the "permanent infrastructure, or staff support system of the drug business." Metropolitan Miami remains thick with the burghers of the drug trade: not only smugglers but also bankers, boat captains, money launderers, luxury home builders, criminal defense lawyers, fancy car dealers, discreet accountants, and even the occasional nosy journalist. Not all of these people are lawbreakers, but all feed off the multi-billion-dollar pool of cash generated by the cocaine business in south Florida.



Drugs have remade the landscape of Miami. Drive north from Cocoplum and you'll pass the padlocked mansion of a local philanthropist beloved for his support of the Miami Zoo. Local animal lovers were shocked when he was indicted and convicted for being a major cocaine distributor and sent to jail for 100 years. The man's father was apparently a major drug dealer too, but the government dropped all drug charges against him in 1989 because he once worked for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Swing right along Bayshore Drive and you'll eventually come to Brickell Avenue, the Wall Street of the cocaine world. A couple of years ago, a federal drug prosecutor said that if you tore down every bank in Miami that accepted drug money, Brickell Avenue would be a parking lot.

And if you cruise north on Brickell Avenue towards downtown Miami, you will run into Abel Holtz Boulevard. Abel Holtz is a prominent socialite, philanthropist, and banker. He has little in common with Marion Barry, save that he is a self-made man, and a public figure who once succumbed to the allure of the world of drugs.

**M**arion Barry's father died when he was four. His mother moved the family to Memphis. "His parents gave him love and affection..." sang Stevie Wonder in "Living for the City." "Keep him strong, moving in the right direction..."

Barry was an unexceptional child except for a powerful desire to win acceptance. He became one of the first black Eagle Scouts in Memphis, something his friends found slightly ridiculous. He earned chemistry degrees at LeMoyne College and Fisk University while also playing a leading role in the Civil Rights Movement. He moved to Washington in 1965.

Barry made his mark immediately. The city's black majority was divided between a light-skinned elite and a less-educated, poorer, dark-skinned working class. Barry tended to identify with the have-nots who had long been apathetic and leaderless. He launched a bus boycott to protest a five-cent fare increase; he organized a boycott of department stores that wouldn't publicly support his campaign for D.C. self-government. By March 1968, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry wrote that Barry was "fast becoming the leading catalyst for change in Washington."

Ironically, the executive branch and the *Washington Post*—the two institutions that Barry now claims conspired to crush him—were instrumental in his political success. In the summer of 1968, Barry's job-training program, Pride Inc., won a \$3.8 million contract from the Labor Department. Barry moved on to a successful campaign for the school board and then for city council president. In 1978, he ran for mayor and was endorsed by the *Post*, giving him an establishment seal of approval. He was the candidate of white liberals as well as blacks moving from civil rights agitation into the political mainstream. Barry won narrowly. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall administered the oath of office.

"You're in," Marshall congratulated the new mayor. Barry was in charge of the government of a city of 600,000 people, and inherited the responsibility for its decaying downtown, its public transportation system, its enclaves of professional whites, its large proud black middle-class, its many poor neighborhoods, its lousy, bloated school system, and its persistent drug problem.

**N**ot the least of the reasons for D.C.'s drug problem was the cocaine boom in Miami. The federal government responded slowly. In 1978, just a few blocks from Marion Barry's new office, Richard

Stankey, an analyst in the Treasury Department, was monitoring banks in Florida. He had noticed the astonishing amounts of surplus cash they were accumulating: \$1.3 billion in 1975, \$3.2 billion in 1978. The only explanation, Stankey concluded, was drugs. As early as 1976, he had forwarded his findings and detailed documentation to the Drug Enforcement Administration. "Nevertheless, it was not until September, 1979, when our study of currency transaction in the Federal Reserve offices throughout the United States documented our earlier findings, that there was sufficient support for a project," said a high-level Treasury Department memo.

The project was Operation Greenback, a high-level committee of representatives from various federal agencies organized to investigate Florida banks accepting huge cash deposits. Twenty-four banks were put under scrutiny.

One of these banks was Capital Bank, owned by Abel Holtz. Between March 1980 and August 1981, a Colombian currency trader and his couriers deposited a quarter-billion dollars in cash at Capital Bank. Three or four times a week, couriers would arrive with satchels, duffel bags, suitcases, and shopping bags filled with small bills. When a bank employee raised questions about the deposits, Holtz took personal control of the account. He provided the Colombians with a pri-

***It made much more political sense to let the media air soundbites of politicians holding black crack babies in their arms than to stroll the streets of Miami's Cocoplum, pointing out the mansions of Cuban-American drug smugglers.***

vate office to count the money and charged them a flat fee of \$300,000 every two weeks. The cash continued to pour in.

Abel Holtz was never charged with any criminal violations for his actions in 1982. Agents from Operation Greenback later seized the Colombians' account at Capital Bank. In the civil case, upholding the seizure, a federal judge concluded that Abel Holtz "knew or should have known that the money was drug tainted." Holtz now says that accepting the \$242 million was "a mistake," and that he never again accepted large cash deposits.

Holtz's actions were not unusual in the Miami financial community. There were dozens of other Florida bankers who knew or should have known that they were accepting drug profits. Another local institution, Continental National Bank, was reported to have accepted \$300 million in cash deposits in a single year.

Holtz's "mistake" proved no obstacle to his socializing with the nation's political elite. In 1981, Holtz bought a bank in Washington. In October 1982, he hired a former U.S. Senator, Richard Stone, to serve as president of Capital Bank. Holtz hired the late Edward Bennett Williams, a National Democratic Party powerbroker, as his lawyer. Holtz's net worth was estimated to be \$80 million, at least \$2 million of which was earned banking drug money.

**I**n November 1982, Marion Barry won reelection and literally changed the complexion of D.C. politics. Barry crafted a new bloc of support, based less on the votes of the city's well-off white minority and more on the black working class. His policies hadn't done that much for the city's poorest residents but he presented himself to blacks as the "blackest" candidate in the race. Barry's frank racial style alienated the already suspicious black elite and his growing patronage network disturbed white, "good government" liberals. Barry, however, cleverly fortified himself by working closely with powerful white real-estate developers leading the city's downtown building boom.

Arrogance and sloppiness began to creep into Barry's style. Though married, Barry's many girlfriends were no secret. Corruption flourished in city agencies. A federal investigation was launched into city contracting procedures. In 1985, Barry's top aide, Ivanhoe Donaldson, pled guilty to pocketing \$175,000 in city funds. At least ten other city officials were caught in similar scams. And in 1983 there was a published report that Barry had been seen snorting cocaine in a downtown strip joint. The mayor dismissed the charge as the work of racists.

**A**s the Barry machine solidified its grip on power in D.C., the cocaine business solidified itself in Miami. The heyday of Miami's Cocaine Cowboys, young Colombian drug dealers who duelled with Uzis on the city's freeways, was ending. The major cocaine producers of Colombia were establishing a network of discrete and dependable distributors in Miami. By the end of 1981, note Jeff Leen and Guy Gugliotta in their book *Kings of Cocaine*, the cocaine business "was rapidly moving toward an almost corporate order."

Violence subsided and the business grew. Staggering amounts of drug cash continued to flow into local banks. Drug users like Marion Barry gave their five-, ten-, and twenty-dollar bills to street dealers who paid their local suppliers who had paid wholesalers and so on up the cocaine foodchain to the kingpins in Miami, who deposited the cash in Florida banks. In 1984, Florida banks took in \$6 billion more in cash than they paid out.

Miami became the political focal point of the war on drugs—but only briefly. In 1982, Vice President George Bush was appointed to run something called the South Florida Task Force. Bush coordinated a highly-publicized federal effort to curb the burgeoning drug trade in south Florida. Bush emphasized the interdiction of drug shipments as the way to win the drug war. It was a total failure. Most experts estimate that cocaine imports into Florida doubled every year during Bush's watch.

Bush staged a discrete retreat from Miami. In 1983, the South Florida Task Force was expanded into something called the National Narcotics Border Interdiction Service. In 1984, Bush ceded his leading role in the drug war to Ed Meese's Justice Department. In 1985, one of Meese's aides promised a scorched-earth policy against recreational drug users and Nancy Reagan introduced her "Just Say No" campaign. The sheer success of Miami cocaine entrepreneurs prompted the anti-drug warriors to shift the focus of their attention from the leaders of the corporate order of cocaine to the casual drug user.

**M**arion Barry was a casual drug user. In 1985, the mayor was called before a grand jury to testify whether he had bought cocaine from

WAS

COOL

IS





# B-BOYS

**Forget the fat gold chains and designer sweats. As SCOTT PAULSON BRYANT reports, B-boys have traded in L.L. Cool J for L.L. Bean—and they're wearing baseball caps with a vengeance.**

Overheard downtown, from a white girl who's sporting two pairs of doorknocker earrings that do not particularly complement her Betsey Johnson multiples: "Black boys have the hardest time. But they still manage to be the most fabulous-looking things on the street."

## I. Some History

A couple of summers ago I escorted my sister and her friends to the Def Jam hip hop extravaganza at Madison Square Garden. Tami and Carlos and William and Roberto poured into Penn Station with tons of other Long Island kids who had taken the LIRR into Manhattan for a night of music and adventure. They were in the City now: the dangerous, exploitative City, consumer and regurgitator of nice little black teenagers like themselves. They were looking at each other, at the numbers of teens who looked back at them, at me. I was expected to get them safely upstairs into Madison Square Garden, not knowing that these young fashion and culture sophisticates would teach me—the jaded old Ivy Leaguer who'd long ago escaped the suburbs for the City—a thing or two.

We got in, got seated, and the fun began. Teams of teenagers in gold chains and hightops roamed the aisles looking not so much, I suppose, for "violence," but for others looking just enough not like themselves—mirrors with cracks or blemishes, literal representations of their own insecurities—to provoke casual disgust, B-boy giggles, or blind terror. They were weirdly ritualistic about it all. One brother would step on a sneaker and fists would fly. A chain might be glimpsed—in envy, in admiration—and before you could say "Krugerrand," words would be exchanged: "Faggot," "Long Island Boy," "You mean Strong Island man," "Your Mama," "Yours." And they'd continue on in their baggy khakis and NBA T-shirts, which seemed to be the latest (and oddly conservative) dress code: preppy B-boy or academic hardrock. And smart jackets, not the bulbous, ballooning bomber jackets or tacky sheepskins of a few years ago.

A typical hip black boy in NYC and its surroundings that summer, then: a boxcut fade, a button-down oxford waving over widecut khakis, or denims almost hanging off the ass (so as to show off the beautiful boxers under-

neath), and the oddest feature of all, Dock-sider bucklers. What had prompted the shift from the black boy-style gangsterism of fat gold chains and designer sweats? What had motivated the trade-off: L.L. Cool J for L.L. Bean? Hoodium conservatism for Ivy League buy-out?

The change was most apparent when the artists paraded across stage. KRS-ONE lamented the death of Scott La Rock—wearing hightops and Levi's. Eric B. & Rakim knew we got soul—in thick ropes of gold and Gucci paraphernalia. The same for the rest of the groups, culminating in L.L., the hardest-working hard rock in show biz, in his designer sweats and Kangols. Where were the Kangols in the audience?

"That's played out now," Carlos said, relegating it all to silly cliché. "That B-boy stuff is for gangsters."

"Pseudo-gangsters," Wil iam shot in.

"—and criminals. That's not us."

Well, what's with the bank teller look? I wanted to scream at them, in my fatigues and Guatemalan shirt and Converse hightops—the clothes, I'd been told, that scream (WHITE) COLLEGE BOY!—"It's a cap-out. Where are the gold chains when we need them? Where are the Kangols? Where's our difference?"

Out of a job or in jail, Carlos informed me Or dead.

Then I understood. Even the gangster had gone out of style.

The new uniform was that, though: a uniform. Everyone, even the drug dealers I knew, were sporting these preppy-looking duds, perhaps as a way of cleaning up the image, returning to the constantly evolving drawing board that is our culture and emerging with a model for the post-hip hop nation: Goodbye New Black Aesthetic, hello New Black Antiseptic.

## II. Some Theory

I used the above situation to show how black boys—regardless of who's censoring whom or which white cop is bulleting down which black cousin or uncle or bro—reconstruct themselves, and ultimately reconstruct the culture around them. Black British theorist Paul Gilroy once wrote: "Black culture actively makes and remakes itself." Ah, yes. The neo-afrocentrism of the educated black

left combined with the residue of black power that still resides in the bloodstreams of the urban and suburban post-Malcolm X young has filtered down fashionwise. Dreads are the rage—the little stylish hair-spokes have been added to the aforementioned big, preppy look. African beads are swinging in unison with the dreads and it's all getting topped off by a new wave of caps. Caps: The kids are wearing baseball caps with a vengeance: across class lines, sexuality lines, and team support lines, baseball caps have managed to make a fashionable return.

So, I went on a hunt to find out what this return to team-logo-bearing cap-wearing meant. Did the girls go for a certain team? Did certain high schools divide along baseball cap lines? Or did the caps simply represent a new stage of the ever-changing style war that is the birthright of young black men everywhere?

### a) The Icon Theory

At a party the other night, a brother was beautifully turned out in a white denim cut-off, cuffed-over overall set with a white BVD T-shirt underneath. One strap fell casually over his left shoulder. A simple string of beads fell to the pocket of the bib. His parted fade was hidden beneath a Chicago Bulls cap, but he was wearing a pair of spanking-new Patrick Ewing Adidas. I asked him if he preferred one team to the other. "Nope. The sneakers are just dope." He thought for a second. "Actually, Jordan is bad. And he's fine."

Hmmmm. . . .

At my barber shop near my parents' house in Long Island, an 18-year-old in a Pistons cap says plainly, "I wear this 'cause Detroit is the shit. Period." He pulls at the blue boxers riding over the edge of his sweatshorts. "Actually, I'm wearing this because I needed a cut. I probably won't bother with it again until about a week or two," he says. "And yeah, it will be this one."

Which is what I call the Wig Theory. I wear my own Korean-stard Yankees cap like a wig. Meaning, when my almost-played-out fade needs a touch-up or I just don't feel like running that comb through my naps before I go out, I throw on a cap—a baseball cap—to cover up what folks don't have to see. My cousin sports a Yankees one day and a Mets the next. It doesn't matter to him, he says. "I

ain't getting paid like Strawberry. I ain't got no loyalty."

### b) The Color Theory

Which has nothing to do with Frances Cress Welsing. Just the color scheme of the cap. Most of the brothers I spoke to said simply that they wear the caps they wear simply because of the color. The colors of the caps match the colors of their outfits. Rob has 12 caps. Not out of loyalty to 12 teams, but because his summer outfits may need additional accessories. Tim has a Yankees cap because most of his shorts and T-shirts are blue and/or white.

### c) The Banjy Realness Theory

In the Ball culture of black gay folk, there's a category called Banjy Realness. After the voguing category, but before runway modeling, boys bitch, queen, or anywhere in between don their hardest-looking ensemble and make like the toughest thing on the block. They pimp-roll; they cratch-grab; they lay it on thick, partly commenting on the street-warrior-posse poses of the B-boy oppressor, partly showing the straight world who the "real men" are. But it's all for the ironic sake of "realness": Who can be the fiercest, roughest trade? Baseball caps obviously play an important role here. Caps representing teams (like the Raiders) with aggressive reputations are often the caps of choice because if you're bad, your clothes must symbolize badness as well. Actually, that sounds a lot like how straight boys behave. . . .

### d) The Best Cap Theory

Perry is an anti-Mets fan. He wears the caps of the teams that beat the Mets. The Cubs were better than the Mets last season. And in three games in three days this season, the Reds beat the Shea Boys in all three. "I'm a Yankees fan. This is how I show it," he says.

In my barber shop, all the discussion that was started by my innocent question—"Why do you wear that cap?"—led to a discussion about sneakers and the deaths "caused" by them. Rev, the barber who's cut my hair and my friends hair for years, broke out with the best cap theory of them all: "Choose righteousness. It's healthy for you."

Special thanks to Taj and Tim

## SPIKE LEE'S ALL-STAR B-BOY CAPS



**GEORGETOWN HOYAS**—*Black America's Team*. Coach John Thompson, Patrick Ewing, Alonzo Mourning—the team white America hates



**UNLV**—Tark the Shark. Hats only showed up once they won the NCAA



**KANSAS CITY ROYALS**—Nice design, nice royal blue



**PHILADELPHIA SIXERS**—Dr J's Team, now Barkley. Bright red, b/g attraction



**OAKLAND RAIDERS**—Hat made popular by NWA and Chuck D. A lot of it has to do with the Raiders' rep



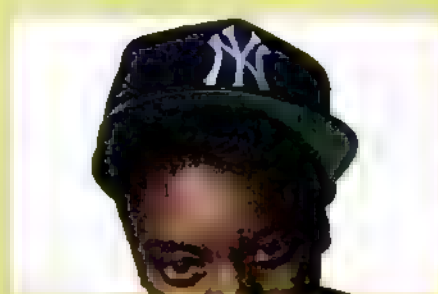
**LOS ANGELES LAKERS**—What can you say? Kareem Magic, Showtime, and kick the Celtics' ass



**NEW YORK METS**—The year they won the World Series, '86, was the last time I've worn their hat. Met management was never too keen on black or Hispanic ball players. Cater to Long Island and Queens fans



**NEW YORK GIANTS**—GREAT LOGO, Lawrence Taylor



**NEW YORK YANKEES**—The best known insignia in sports which Steinbrenner has made a joke



**U. OF NORTH CAROLINA TARHEELS**—Dean Smith, Michael Jordan, James Worthy; powder blue, basketball tradition



**MONTREAL EXPOS**—Funny-looking, clown hats



**BROOKLYN DODGERS**—Classic





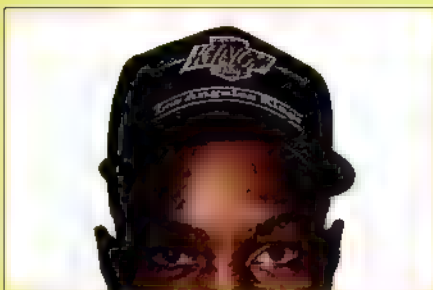
**NEW YORK GIANTS (BASEBALL)**—Willie Mays, Denzel Washington wears this one in "Mo' Better Blues "



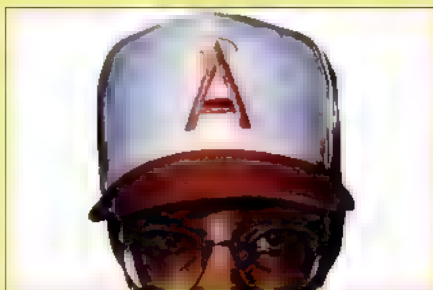
**BROOKLYN DODGERS (WHITE)**—My favorite hat! The classic-classic.



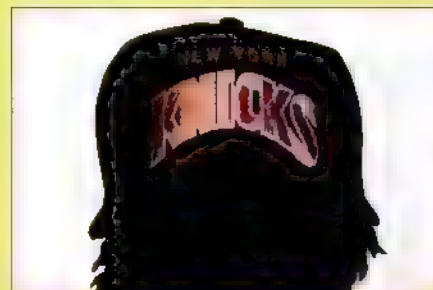
**OAKLAND A's**—People liked this hat even before they won the series, great color combination



**LOS ANGELES KINGS**—Made popular by NWA, very few African-Americans like hockey, so you know it's something else



**CALIFORNIA ANGELS**—The white joint, regular is black I've always liked the "A" with the halo around it.



**NEW YORK KNICKS**—This black version is new. My favorite team in all of sports. If I could fire Al Bianchi and take his job we'd be in the NBA Finals in 2 years! The acquisition of Kiki killed the delicate chemistry of the team that may never be fixed



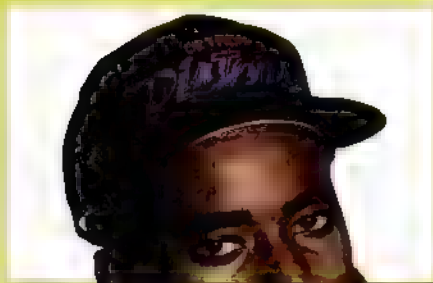
**SYRACUSE ORANGEMEN**—Pearl Washington was the one player that really got the Orangemen out there, too bad he was a bum in the NBA



**CHICAGO BULLS**—One of the most popular hats no matter where you go. You gotta give it up to Air Jordan.



**LOS ANGELES DODGERS**—Classic



**DETROIT PISTONS**—"The Bad Boys", NBA champs, *BACK TO BACK!!!* Good. Anybody but the Celtics



**PITTSBURGH PIRATES**—Made famous by Chuck D—by him wearing it, it became the PE joint.



**BOSTON CELTICS**—Boston sucks. This guy is an "Uncle Tom"

KEEP IT BLUE



Air Views Photography—Paul Harris Design





# KANWIA SPIN

## TOP 20 VIDEO

VIDEO REVIEW, the leading home entertainment magazine, compiles the "Video 20" exclusively for SPIN.

### HOT

#### THINGS THAT GO PLUMP

Aerosmith (Ceffen)

#### PLEASE HAMMER DON'T HURT 'EM: THE MOVIE

MC Hammer (Capitol)

#### STEP BY STEP

New Kids on the Block (CBS Music)

#### THE BOB MARLEY STORY

(Island)

#### THE VALUE OF HUMORANCE

Sinead O'Connor (Polygram)

#### VIDEO EXPOSURE

Expose (Arista)

#### GOLDFISH (JOKES, MAGIC & SOUVENIRS)

The Church (Arista)

#### ELVIS: THE GREAT PERFORMANCES

Elvis Presley (Buena Vista)

#### STRAIGHT UP

Paula Abdul (Virgin)

#### PSYCHEDELIC SEXFUNK: LIVE FROM HEAVEN

Red Hot Chili Peppers (EMI)

### COOL

#### BANNED IN THE U.S.A.

2 Live Crew, dir. Penelope Spheeris (A\*Vision)

#### CRY BABY

Johnny Deep, Iggy Pop, dir. John Waters (MCA Universal)

#### HOUSE PARTY

Kid 'N Play, Full Force (RCA/Columbia)

#### CINEMA PARADISO

dir. Giuseppe Tornatore (HBO)

#### BAD INFLUENCE

Rob Lowe, James Spader (RCA/Columbia)

#### FOREVER JAMES DEAN

documentary dir. Ars Chekmayan (Warner)

#### BRAIN DEAD

George Kennedy, prod. Roger Corman (MGM/UA)

#### MEET THE DOLLHEADS

Anne (Throw Mama ... Ramsey (Media)

#### NINS ON THE RUN

Eric Idle (CBS/Fox)

#### BAD GIRLS GO TO HELL

dir. Dore Wiseman (Sleazeb)

THE PERFECT MIX...  
& YOUR FAVORITE VIDEO

KANWIA

# 2 Live Doo-Doo

MARTHA FRANKEL thinks the Miami rappers' lyrics are a bunch of crap. Does she think their music should be censored? No way.

My friend Nick (age 5) goes into spasms of hysteria when you say the word "doo-doo." In a way, Nick is the perfect audience for 2 Live Crew, the most obvious purveyors of Doo-Doo music. Is Luther Campbell urging young men to rape women, as those who wish to ban his music claim? Not likely. He's simply an ignorant motherfucker whose foul mouth has gotten him rich and famous. Those of us concerned with First Amendment issues must defend his right to make music, but we don't have to pretend that what he writes is more than vile drivel with a backbeat.

That Luther Campbell is beginning to consider himself a free-speech hero in the tradition of Lenny Bruce or Richard Pryor is particularly galling. Yet the fight from the right, led by Miami lawyer and Focus On The Family friend Jack Thompson, has put those on the left on the defensive, and the issue of defending 2 Live Crew's right to make music has overshadowed the ability to admit disgust at the way women are depicted in this music. And the racism involved in going after Luke Records instead of, say, Andrew Dice Clay (whose favorite nursery rhyme goes like this: *Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater / Had a wife, loved to beat her / Smacked her twice across the head / Fucked her ass and went to bed*) is getting shoved aside by those who would have you believe that if 2 Live Crew stopped recording, our streets would be safe.

**It is by no means true that 2 Live Crew have started something new: The attitude towards women in their music can be seen in TV ads, Hollywood movies, on the cover of magazines and newspapers.**

Jack Thompson is completely apoplectic on the subject of *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*. "It scares me that people can advocate the rape of women and get away with it. Before I came on the scene, this album was being sold to children of all ages. This album is such a piece of garbage that it indicts itself. This album isn't about free speech. Its purpose is to titillate, and outrage, and glorify the rape of women. God gave me the gift to be a lawyer, and I'm going to use that gift to fight this garbage."

Funny, I thought lawyers were one of the things God didn't bother with. And don't let Jack Thompson bullshit you. What he and others in the conservative right are practicing are the politics of distraction: Keep their minds on the flag or some smutty lyrics, and they won't notice that we've taken their basic rights away and that the infrastructure of the society is crumbling. (In fact, one of the only really funny things on *Nasty* is this aside about Ronald Reagan: *They took a dick from California / transplanted the motherfucker to Washington, D.C./*

*and it fucked the nation*). Aren't there a lot more important things for the governor of Florida to be concerned about? Don't they have troubles with education and drugs and homelessness?

For some sanity, I talked with Bill Adler, who was the director of publicity at Rush Artist's Management (Run-DMC, Public Enemy, L.L. Cool J, De La Soul) and who now has his own company, Rhyme & Reason Communications. He's been a leader in the fight to get people within the recording industry to get behind 2 Live Crew. "I hate to see rap music reduced to what has been called Hate, Rape, and Rap. There've never been any statistics that support the notion that there's a direct cause-and-effect relationship between this kind of music and abuse of women. Sometimes you read about a kid who comes from the Bible Belt and kills his mother and justifies it with a quotation from the Bible. Does that mean it's time to ban the Bible? Record by record, artist by artist, the overall social effect of rap has been very positive. It does what the best art has always done: It inspires people, gives them hope, gives them energy. Is it all wonderful politically? Absolutely not. But you can't accept this debate on the terms laid out by the Jack Thompsons of the world. You can refuse to buy the music, but once we give in and let them judge one record, we're in deep shit. Hey, this whole culture is misogynistic. There's not one can of beer ever sold without some girl's tit in the picture. This isn't pornography. The question is, Do people buy this record as they would a stroke book? Do they take it home as a marital aid? I would submit that nobody listens to these records for the purpose of achieving climax. It's just an adolescent, dirty-word kind of thing."

See, it's Doo-Doo music. And Campbell himself brings up the subject when he urges you to "lick my asshole til your tongue turns doo-doo brown." Hey Luther, no thanks.

It is by no means true that 2 Live Crew have started something new: The attitude towards women in their music can be seen in TV ads, Hollywood movies, on the cover of magazines and newspapers. "Women as shit" is as old as the hills. But the Crew's insistence that this is all a joke is probably lost on the young boys that make up their audience. And in listening to the work on *Nasty* and their earlier albums, it becomes quite hard to distinguish exactly what the joke is.

In an interview with *Hitmakers* magazine, Campbell said, "We're comedians. We're not political rappers—that's for Public Enemy and Professor Griff. . . . Some people have messages in their music, but we just talk about everyday sex that everybody has."

Like this, from "Put Her In The Buck": *It's the only way to give her more than she wants / like the doggy style you get all the cunt / 'cause all men try real hard to do it / to have her walking funny we try to abuse it / a big stinker pussy can do it all / so we try real hard to just bust the walls / like this*

What, you're not laughing? How 'bout some nursery rhymes? *My momma and your momma was talking a little shit / My momma called your momma a bull-dyked ass bitch / I know your sister and the bitch ain't shit / She slagged me and all the boys / And even sucked our dicks.*

So we'll push real hard for 2 Live Crew's right to make this shit, but that doesn't mean we have to like it.



As Nasty As They Wanna Be.

LIVE CREEPERS

Everything it touches turns delicious.™



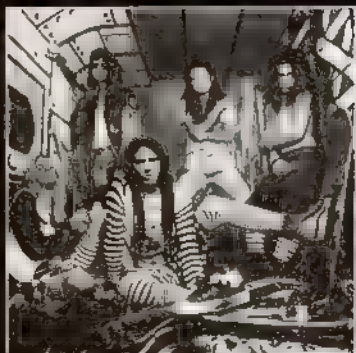
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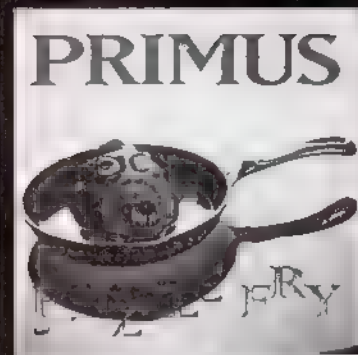
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# Brain Power

One of the most influential bands of the '80s, Bad Brains have split up more often than some people change their socks. Living Colour's VERNON REID sings their praises.

**T**he breakup of a favorite band—for many fans, a confessor, a partner, a teacher, a lover—can wreak absolute havoc on the minds and souls of dedicated followers. Not quite akin to losing a boyfriend or girlfriend, it's more like the breakup of a couple you're close to. You can't do anything about it.

It is possible, then, that with their current split, I am teaching a history lesson about the Bad Brains, a band I'm tempted to call the best band of the 1980s. Or perhaps I should say they could have been the best band of the 1980s—if only the internal differences of the band, which produced music as sonically audacious as theirs (that spiritually intense floating between hardcore/metal and reggae) hadn't also led to a situation where the band appeared to be a series of brilliant flashes rather than a consistently dazzling arc of light.

Emotionally, it was a real roller coaster ride to be a Bad Brains fan, from the elation that carried you upon the release of a new album to the frustration of yet another parting of the ways. To witness Dr. Know's whirling dervish guitar-attacks, was to be privy to spiritual delirium. With dreads almost erect with energy and a face that belied the ferocity of the music by remaining absolutely calm, Dr. Know seemed a sonic and visual orchestra unto himself. All in the name of Jah love, vocalist H.R. warned, shrieked, and offered praise, at times sounding like two or three different voices. And the growling, thumping rhythm section of bassist Darryl Jenifer and drummer Earl Hudson achieved an irresistible groove without the typical funkiness of an R&B band. Bad Brains took the funk into a thrashing trance state.

It was the hardest spiritual music I'd ever heard. From the eponymous Ror cassette to *I Against I*, straight through *Quickness* and the live albums, these Washington, D.C., Rastafarians used reggae ideas—following Jah, railing against the corruption of Babylon—in a forcefully hard-caring, hardcore context, and in the process, each song produced was somehow



Make up to break up, that's all they do—but two Brains are better than none: Darryl Jenifer, left, and Gary Miller.

apocalyptic. Listen to "I Against I" or "House of Suffering": The almost bombastic melodrama of Dr. Know's slash-and-tear skitterings conjures up the threat of Babylon while H.R. exhorts, "Almighty watching / Almighty watching / I against I against I . . ." And on "She's Calling You" from *I Against I*, there's even a pop element: Although H.R.'s plaintive vocal, coupled with Know's ascending chords and the rhythm's grind, aren't beholden to a pop form (the guitar's crunch is much too lethal and direct), they refer to pop in such a knowing way they prove they aren't as unapproachable as is often assumed.

Not inaccessible, but often inactive, Bad Brains broke up three times. In 1984, H.R. and Earl decided to quit the band to form the reggae band Human Rights. They reconciled differences to record *I Against I*. Then H.R. and Earl split again. In 1989, the group was back together again for the *Quickness* LP and tour. And now, the brothers have split again. Roughly every Bad Brains dissolution has been followed by a Human Rights album. When you ask Dr. Know why the band couldn't seem to continue smoothly he says this: "We were a fortunate band in that we didn't set out to play any one thing. I don't want to play just jazz or reggae or hardcore. We established the band to play what we wanted to play. But H.R. wanted to pursue other angles of the music. He wanted to explore more of the roots-reggae sound. He wanted to do a record with just reggae. We all didn't want that. But that is how Jah works. He led us to where we are."

Internal differences often occurred just as Bad Brains were being courted by major record labels.

"Record deals were often in the works when the breakups happened," Dr. Know says. "I think H.R. felt he couldn't do what he wanted to do by being bound to a contract that way. An ironclad record deal might have stifled him or not allowed him to pursue projects." Poised on the brink of getting Jah's word out to a larger audience, Bad Brains' tensions would win out, dissolving the band, and yet preparing them for producing such wondrous works as *I Against I* and *Quickness*.

I called them the best band of the 1980s. Perhaps they were simply the most American band. Relegated oftentimes to fighting it out in the indie trenches with a host of other tough-sounding, ground-breaking bands, Bad Brains also found themselves struggling with the tension between music as (black) culture and music as business. Four Rastas banging out hard, shining brilliance, often playing before crowds of beach-blonded dreads who themselves were trying to figure out where the Brains' collision of styles and sensibilities fit into their lives. By finding a connection between the spiritual malaise of hardcore and the spiritual strength of reggae, Bad Brains challenged deeply engrained notions of who should make what type of music and why. Perhaps it was this successful recontextualization of forms—so standardly black and American—that made it so hard for the group to stay together.

Here's hoping that Jah sees to their reignition.

*Editor's Note: At press time, the Bad Brains were scheduled to reenter the studio to cut some new material . . . Stay tuned.*



# REBELS

## BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS



Buck the system with KRS-ONE of BDP. This street philosopher is always teaching, never preaching. His new album "Edutainment," features "Love's Gonna Get'cha (Material Love)," "Blackman In Effect" and "Ya Know The Rules."

On Jive/RCA Records: cassettes, compact discs and albums.

## D-NICE

Call him a maverick. Call him a revolutionary. "Call Me D-Nice" is the debut album from this former BDP DJ. He co-wrote and produced "Self Destruction," the rap that started a movement, bringing home the issue of Black-On-Black Crime. His album features "Call Me D-Nice," "Crumbs On The Table" and "The TR 808 Is Coming."



## TOO SHORT



This Oakland rapper made his reputation on the street. Now millions swear by his word. His new album "Short Dog's In The House," features "Ain't Nothin' But A Word To Me" (duet with Ice Cube), "The Ghetto" and "Paula & Janet."

## A TRIBE CALLED QUEST

The music is jazzy, quirky, iconoclastic. Their philosophy is peace. That's the Tribe vibe. Journey into a brave new world of rap with A Tribe Called Quest's debut album. It's called "People's Instinctive Travels And The Paths Of Rhythm," and features "Bonita Applebum," "I Left My Wallet In El Segundo" and "Push It Along."



## MR. LEE



Mr. Lee is the foremost innovator of a whole new movement on the dance floor: Rap House. His debut album "Get Busy," is shaking things up around the world. It features "Get Busy," "Pump That Body" and "I Like The Girls."

# WITH A CAUSE

## RAP ON JIVE



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# Black Black CHUCK D and media assassin

**HARRY ALLEN** on Afrikan people, white supremacy, and the future of Public Enemy.

*Black people: Read this, make copies, give them to as many black people as you can, then tape your original to your doors.*

*White people: Read this, make copies, give them to as many white people as you can, then tape your original copy over your beds. Read Isaiah 28.15. Pray*

**T**he most troubling signs of what the '90s will be is this new McCarthyism/witch-hunt/quest for conservatism. But I understand it, so I don't have a problem with it. America has too much junk under the rug, has told too many lies about black people and itself. So almost any statement we make is indicting, which is a large part of the fear of hip hop music.

I'm not concerned with the "censorship issue" per se, because I see this as an awakening that white people have to make. America isn't what you thought, white people. Grow up. Langston Hughes said black people, "just by being black have been on the blacklist all our lives. . . . Censorship for us begins at the color line." Black people are used to being censored. So it's not our virginity that's being lost here

The Top Four: Joblessness, homelessness, poor health care, and education. They can't do nuthin' about those things, so they worry about something else, trying to obscure what should be real objectives. "We have found the enemy and it is us?" It's like when they found that it wasn't the Russians, they had to find another enemy. So it's 2 Live Crew, destroying "traditional American values," something any black person with a rearview mirror back to slavery knows America never had.

Black people, stop using the word "racism"—forget that word, don't use it anymore—and start using the words "white supremacy." Do this because "racism" and "white supremacy" are the same thing. Black people understand this easily, but don't speak it. Most white people understand this, but don't *know* it. This means that most white people, by a path of logical deduction and truth, could get past the layers of lying that being "white" requires and understand this, but don't do so easily or openly.

In discussing white supremacy, though, nobody's really fooled, and nobody's really fooling anybody. If Afrikan people would quit *worrying* about what white people are going to say or do and start *anticipating*, thinking clearly and speaking simply and fearlessly,

we would move forward towards the goal of ending white supremacy. We've supplied a book list at the end of this piece that will help you think clearly and speak simply and fearlessly.

If people who have bought "white" as a description of themselves—in order to compensate for things they lack—were to be honest and admit to the planet that "whiteness" doesn't exist and is a lie, we would move forward towards the goal of ending white supremacy. We've supplied a book list at the end of this piece that will help you be honest.

***A black person is better off dealing with a Klansman than a liberal.***

**I**n *Textbook for Victims of White Supremacy*, Neely Fuller, Jr., defines a "white liberal" as "a white person who speaks and/or acts to maintain, expand, and/or refine the practice of white supremacy (rac-



ism) by very skillfully *pretending* not to do so." And as time goes on, that whole form and art of refining it to hide it just comes out more. Somebody who could have been very liberal in the mid-'70s, now it's just like a played-out old game. Played-out like a pair of plaids.

I read the Dan Charnas article on Public Enemy in *Request*. I didn't like it. I wanna beat his ass. Take somebody white, they start reading Malcolm and everybody to the T, then all of a sudden they think they're black, and then they start criticizing *you*. So, his famous thing is he likes what Malcolm says, "We need to stop singing and start swinging." What do you mean by *that*? Number One, if we were to take that philosophy, I'd start swingin' on you! How's he gonna feel about that when I beat his punk-little-white-boy ass? Now motherfucker, what the fuck is up? I thought he was cool, which I never hardly fall for. But ahma see him. We'll see his ass again.

I think Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* is another confusing writer. This is a man who says every other Sunday that art is open to interpretation, that there are a list of things to consider when interpreting art, and that the artist's own meaning is near or at the top of the list. But four days after "Welcome To The Terror-dome" came out, Pareles vomited up this article saying that it was "anti-Semitic"—a word I have yet to see defined to my satisfaction—and that that was the only way anybody could see it. Stuff like that makes me think of what they mean when they say that a black person is better off dealing with a Klansman than a liberal.

**T**his sister, Tonya Williams, 17, who lives near Raleigh, North Carolina, told me how *she didn't* care about Blackness until her curiosity was sparked by hearing a "supporter of Cheshamard" in "Rebel Without A Pause." She didn't even know who Malcolm X was until she started listening to Public Enemy. Now she's reading *The Assassination of Malcolm X* by George Breitman, but she's not just reading it; she's reading it *critically*. I told her to live for her God and for her people.

I can name two key events that brought the change about. One was Madison Square Garden, August 17, 1987. It just seems like the seriousness of Scott La Rock's death took everything from being fun and games. It brought the attitude of the people in New York and in the Garden to a point where they opened their eyes to Public Enemy that particular night. We put 14 S1W's [Security of the First World, Public Enemy's sentries] on the stage at the Garden, male and female. People's minds were ready for it at that point. Stetsasonic was also key in priming everybody that night, too. Prepping the crowd with Scott La Rock's message about how people need to get their heads together... people was like, rolling with that for the first time. Then we came on—it was another level. Eric B. & Rakim was even considered thrown in the bunch. You had KRS ONE—Kris had the picture of Scott La Rock over the turntables, lookin' like a coffin. It was really a somber occasion.

The other key event was when we made "Bring the Noise," by two moves: Malcolm X in the beginning, "too black... too strong," and the mention of "Farrakhan's a prophet." It was just something that just wasn't supposed to be there. That's when people started to say, "Yo: what these brothers is about is some other shit."

**I**f I could make two requests of every black person that reads this, they would be, one, pick up as much education and information as you possibly can about surviving in this system. Surviving, as opposed to "prospering," or "overcoming," or "taking part?"

Yes, because surviving is basically what you're going to do. If you "prosper," that means you ain't sharing your shit around.

The other one is before you criticize, *do*. See, my whole thing is like this: Rhetoric and talk is cheap like a motherfucker. Like I just told [Sister] Souljah the other day. You can read historical texts; you can read 9 million motherfuckin' stories on who did what to who and all, you can fuckin' have it broken down like Amiri Baraka: the reasons for this, and the "Reasons To Be Cheerful" and all this other shit. If you can't get across to a homeboy on the block that's sayin', "Yo, nigger, I'm out to get them *hoes*!", which is a *big* chunk of black men in America, your fuckin' education don't mean *shit*. You don't mean shit. You don't mean *not jack doo-doo*. Your objective should be what kind of communication program do you come up with to turn this brother from being on that path to self-destruction, onto some kind of path of, "I'm all right. At least I can think on my own. I don't need those things that I thought I needed." Then all that teaching comes in, once everybody gets to a certain level. But then you gotta come up with solutions, like what to do?

Now, this is what you can do. Break down motherfuckin' *capitalism* and *Marxism* to a motherfucker that just wanna know how to get *paid*. My whole thing is that a whole lot of black people, and especially

## We expect continued attempts to label Public Enemy as "racist," "anti-Semitic," "misogynist," "homophobic," etc., thus confusing and diluting its message.

those white liberals, they get so fuckin' *booked*, they don't know how to bring it down to a practicality. That's one thing that Minister Farrakhan at least does.

If history is any example and PE stays true to its mission, here are some of the things that will probably happen. Call or write as you see them occur, or not occur. We'll do the same for you

**1. PE will continue, as Lerone Bennett, Jr., says we should, to "clarify and expose the limits of white rhetoric."**

**2. PE expects:**

a. Continued attempts to label Public Enemy as "racist," "anti-Semitic," "misogynist," "homophobic," etc., thus confusing and diluting its message.

b. Continued and increased attacks from certain police, business, and other groups. This will make it more difficult for the band to tour or travel, as it did for Paul Robeson in the 50s, thus limiting their influence, exposure, marketability, and ability to earn a living.

c. Continued support from CBS and Def Jam Records, with an eventual sharp fall-off, as well as attempts by certain people in the business of selling records to make PE's music and videos more palatable to white

compact-disc buyers.

d. More writing about PE's lyrics & music that hails them for innovation, relevance, and intelligence, done with increased depth. Expect more writers attempting to make the point that PE is "full of contradictions." Also, that "they are destroying themselves," and that Chuck D is "not that smart," "not that tough," "not that sure of himself," "not that etc."

e. Increased public support, with some fall-off, increased interest, and increased public criticism as the message becomes more difficult for some to swallow; i.e., Afrocentric

f. More fan mail, especially from the Eastern bloc and U.S. prisons. Thanks.

g. Increased law enforcement agency-assisted monitoring, harassment, incarceration, and murder of black people who talk about black people uniting under Blackness.

**3. PE sees eventual "irrelevance," with "replacement" by newer, angrier voices.**

**T**he PE summer tour is over, having played to nearly a million people, and I'm taking a month off. Dr. Anderson Thompson of Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago has started an organization of scholars called the Institute for the Study of White Supremacy. They're holding their first conference in Chicago from October 11-13 and have been calling for papers. PE will be submitting one entitled "White Press Reaction to the Public Enemy *Cress Theory* Mailing." Then in winter-spring '91, I'm thinking about doing a national college speak tour, something a lot of people have been asking about.

What do you think about Afrikan people, white supremacy, and the future of Public Enemy, and why? Write it down. Be as specific and clear as you can be in your replies, and include a phone number if you can. Send your comments and queries to: Chuck D/Harry Allen: The Brothers Black, Dept. S, GPO Box 7718, New York, NY 10116. Public Enemy, blessed & strengthened by the faith of its people, moves on.

**The Black Planet Back-To-School Book List: One-Book-A-Month, September through May.**

*Afrocentricity*, Molefi Kete Asante

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with Alex Haley

*Black Folk's Guide to Making Big Money In America*, George Trower-Subira

*Black Men. Obsolete, Single, Dangerous*, Haki R. Madhubuti

*Black Robes, White Justice*, Bruce Wright

*Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Vol. 1*, Jawanza Kunjufu

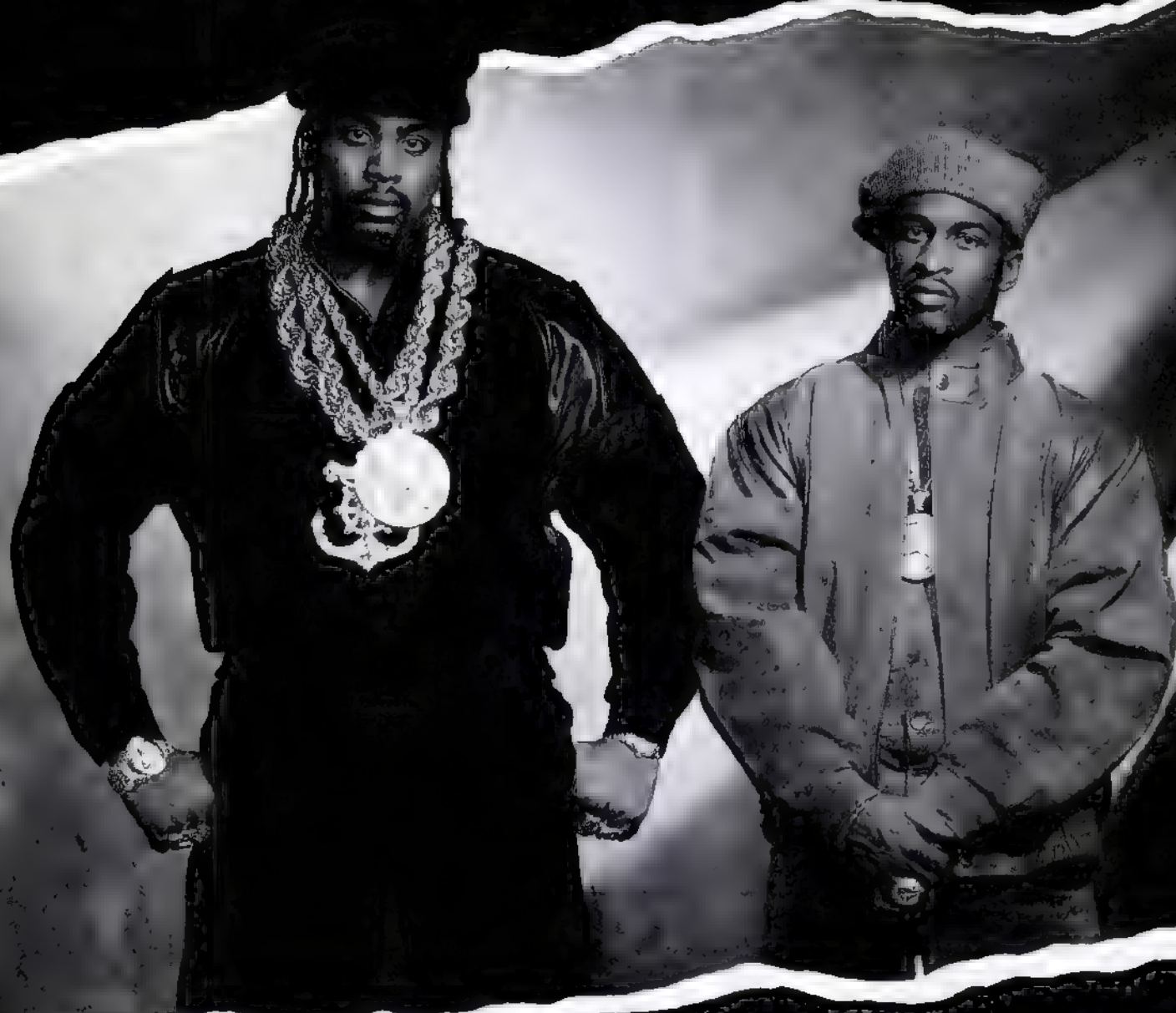
*The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy)*, Frances Cress Welsing, M.D.

*100 Years of Lynching*, Ralph Ginzburg

*The United Independent Compensatory Code/System/Concept. A Textbook/Workbook for Thought, Speech, and/or Action for Victims of White Supremacy*, Neely Fuller, Jr.

# THE RHYTHM HITS

## ERIC B. & RAKIM



### LET THE RHYTHM HIT 'EM

"Masters of their appointed tasks... this bold attempt at cross-generational fusion says more about the Afro-American cultural continuum than a truckload of medallions and dashikis."



— Mark Coleman *Rolling Stone*

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— *L.A. Times*

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OPINION

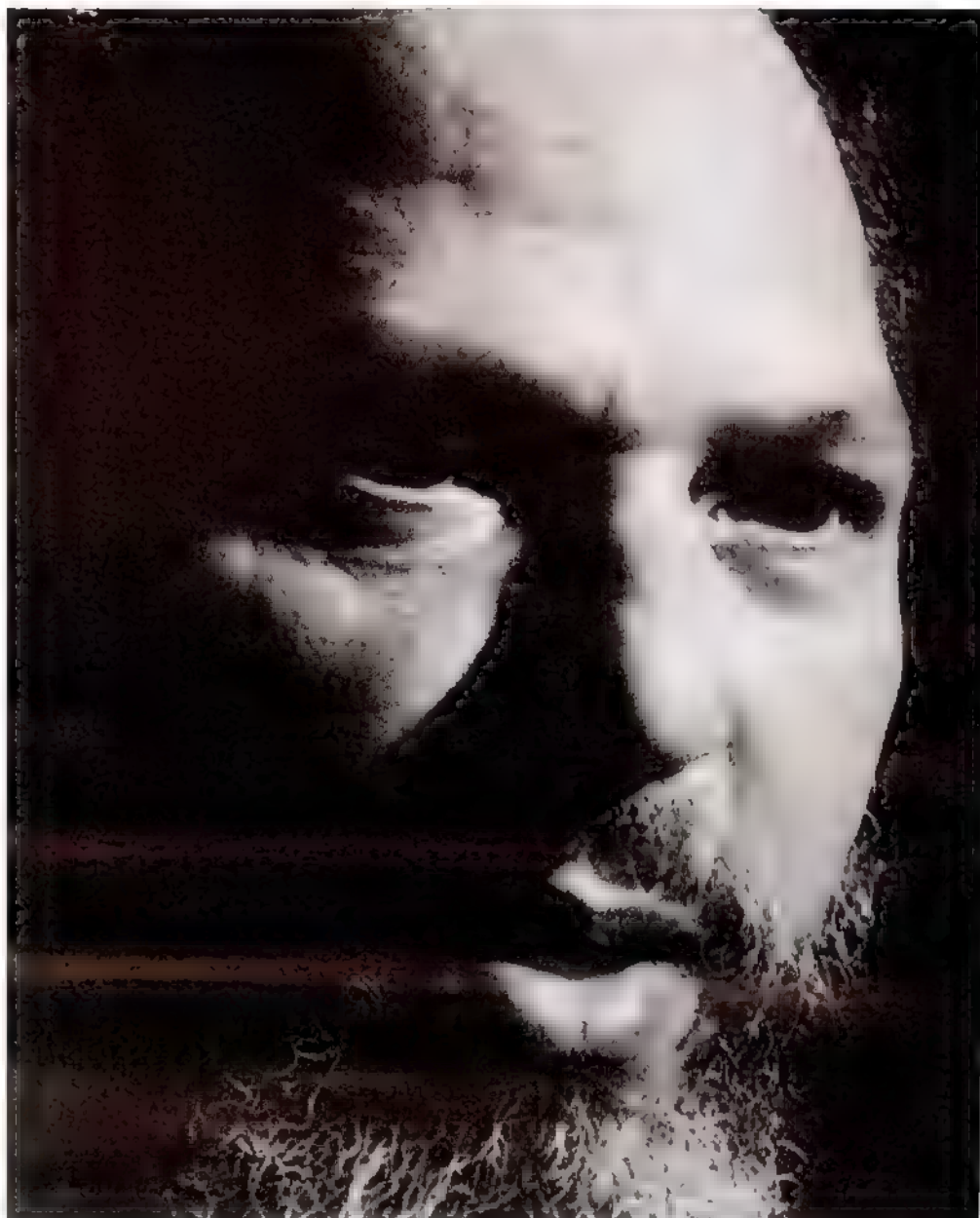
# I Don't Want To Hire Nobody Just 'Cause They're Black

**Fight racism by respecting African-American culture, not by denying it. Playwright AUGUST WILSON, two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, takes on Hollywood.**

**E**ddie Murphy said that to me. We were sitting in his house in New Jersey discussing the possibility of Paramount Pictures purchasing the rights to my play *Fences*. The subject was film directors. I said I wanted a black director for the film and he said, "I don't want to hire nobody just 'cause they black." My response was immediate. "Neither do I," I said. What Mr. Murphy meant I am not sure I meant that I wanted to hire somebody talented, who understood the play and saw the possibilities of the film, who would approach my work with the same amount of passion and measure of respect with which I approach it, and finally, who shared the same cultural responsibilities of the characters. That was more than three years ago. I have not talked to Mr. Murphy about the subject since. Paramount Pictures did purchase the rights to make the film in 1987. What I thought of as a straightforward, logical request has been greeted by blank, vacant stares and the pious shaking of heads as if in response to my unfortunate naiveté. I usually have had to repeat my request, "I want a black director," as though it were a complex statement rendered in a foreign tongue. I have often heard the same verbatim response, "We don't want to hire anyone just because they are black." It has taken me three years to learn to read the implication in that statement. What is being implied is that the only qualification any black has is the color of his skin. For some occupations this seems to work just fine. I doubt if anyone has ever heard the owner or the coach of an NBA team say they didn't want to hire anybody just because they were black.

In the film industry the prevailing attitude is that a black director couldn't do the job and to insist upon one is to make the film "unmakeable," partly because no one is going to turn a budget of \$15 million over to a black director. That this is routinely done for novice white directors is beside the point. The ideas of ability and qualification are certainly not new to blacks. The skills of black lawyers, doctors, dentists, accountants, and mechanics are often greeted with skepticism, even from other blacks. "Man, you sure you know what you doing?"

At the time of my last meeting with Paramount Pictures in January 1990, a well-known, highly respected white director wanted very much to direct the film. Since I don't go to the movies I don't know his work, but he is universally praised for his sensitive and intelligent direction. I accept that he is a very fine film director. But he is not black. He is not a product of black American culture—a culture that was honed out of the black experience and fired in the kiln of slavery and survival—and he does not share the sensibilities of



When August Wilson, above, sold Paramount Pictures the film rights to his play *Fences*, he thought it only natural that a black director should be given the project. Paramount didn't agree. Even Eddie Murphy didn't agree.

black Americans. I have been asked if I am not, by rejecting him on the basis of his race, doing the same thing Paramount Pictures is doing by not hiring a black director? That is a fair, if shortsighted, question which deserves a response.

First, I am not carrying a banner for black directors. I think they should carry their own. I am not trying to get work for black directors. I am trying to get the film of my play made in the best possible way. As Americans of various races we share a broad cultural ground, a commonality of society that links its various and diverse elements into a cohesive whole that can be defined as "American." We share certain mythologies. A history. We share political and economic systems, and a rapidly developing, if suspect, ethos. Within these commonalities are specifics. Specific ideas and attitudes that are not shared on the common cultural ground. These remain the property and possession of the people who develop them, and on that "field of manners and rituals of intercourse" (to use James Baldwin's eloquent phrase), lives are played out. At the point where they intercept and link to the broad commonality of American culture, they influence how that culture is shared and to what purpose.

**W**hite American society is made up of various European ethnic groups which share a common history and sensibility. Black Americans are a racial group which do not share the same sensibilities. The specifics of our cultural history are very much different. We are an African people who have been here since the early-17th century. We have a different way of responding to the world. We have different ideas about religion, different manners of social intercourse. We have different ideas about style, about language. We have different aesthetics. Someone who does not share the specifics of a culture remains an outsider, no matter how astute a student they are or how well meaning their intentions. I declined a white director not on the basis of race but on the basis of culture. White directors are not qualified for the job. The job requires someone who shares the specifics of the culture of black Americans.

The suggestion from a high-ranking Paramount executive that they simply hire a "human being" made me realize that something else is going on here. What is going on here is something very old. It has to do with how Africans were first viewed in this country, the residuals of which still affect and infect our society. The early plantation owners, unfamiliar and uninterested in African culture, viewed their slaves as slow, dull-witted, childlike, and otherwise incapable of grasping complex ideas. This was, if incorrect, at least an honest view. African culture, its style and content, was so incongruent with European sensibilities and beliefs that Africans seemed primitive and slow and dull-witted. Elsewhere there were whites who bore a different witness and testimony. On Nantucket Island, for example, sailors who had sailed around the world on whaling expeditions and had been exposed to various cultures saw Africans as black-skinned humans of a different culture capable of all the diversity of human conduct and endeavor.

The shortsightedness of the plantation owners must be thought of as willful. While viewing African slaves with curiosity they did not allow that curiosity to lead

to an examination of the people or their culture. To do so would have been to extend a hand of welcome into the human community. This would have led to a cultural exchange of ideas, postures, worldviews, language concepts, eating habits, attitudes, style, concepts of beauty and justice, responses to pleasure and pain, and a myriad of other cultural identities. It was easier and a point of justification for their ideas of Christianity, to ignore Africans by consigning them to the status of subhumans, whom they in their benevolence had rescued from the dark ages that reigned in the jungles of Africa.

Their assigning of Africans, and others of different cultures, to a subhuman status had been sanctioned by the founding fathers, who were writing about equality and self-evident truths while systematically eliminating the native population and lending support and credence, through their documents and laws, to the enslavement of blacks in the South.

I suspect to pursue a cross-cultural exchange would have done a violent damage to the plantation owners' idea of the correctness of their being and their manner. They insisted that their ideas about the world and how to live in it were the only correct and valid ideas about human life. Their manners and their being reigned supreme. This led to the idea of white supremacy. Such an idea cannot exist without something to measure it against. If whites were intelligent, then blacks must be ugly. If they are imaginative, then black must be dull. These notions, while not embraced by all whites in the society, led to the creation of a linguistic environment in which they could grow and prosper. They became part of the society's consciousness and part of its truth. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* gives the following character definitions listed under "black" and "white."

**White:** free from blemish, moral stain, or impurity; outstandingly righteous; innocent; not marked by malignant influence; notably pleasing or auspicious; fortunate; notably ardent; decent; in a fair upright manner; a sterling man; etc

**Black:** outrageously wicked; a villain; dishonorable; expressing or indicating disgrace, discredit, or guilt, connected with the devil, expressing menace; sullen; hostile; unqualified; committing violation of public regulations, illicit, illegal; affected by some undesirable condition; etc

No wonder I had been greeted with incredulous looks when I suggested a black director for *Fences*. I sat in the offices of Paramount Pictures suggesting that someone who was affected by an undesirable condition, who was a violator of public regulations, who was sullen, unqualified, and marked by a malignant influence, direct the film. While they were offering a sterling man, who was free from blemish, notably pleasing, fair and upright, decent, and outstandingly righteous—with a reputation to boot!

Despite such a linguistic environment, the culture of black Americans has emerged and defined itself in strong and effective vehicles that have become the flagbearers for self-determination and self-identity. In the face of such, those who are opposed to the ideas of a "foreign" culture permeating the ideal of an Ameri-

**Let's make a rule. Blacks don't direct Italian films. Italians don't direct Jewish films. Jews don't direct black American films. That might account for about 3 percent of the films that are made in this country. The other 97 percent—let it be every man for himself.**

can culture founded on the icons of Europe, seek to dilute and control it by setting themselves up as the assayers of its value and the custodians of its offspring. Therein lies the crux of the matter as it relates to Paramount Pictures and the film *Fences*—whether we as blacks are going to have control over our own culture and its products.

Some Americans, both black and white, do not see any value to black American lives that do not contribute to the leisure or profit of white America. Some Americans, both black and white, would deny that a black American culture even exists. Some Americans, both black and white, would say that by insisting on a black director for *Fences* I am doing irreparable harm to the efforts of black directors who have spent the last 15 years trying to get Hollywood to ignore the fact that they are black. The origins of such ideas are so very old and shallow that I am amazed to see them so vividly displayed in 1990.

What to do? Let's make a rule. Blacks don't direct Italian films. Italians don't direct Jewish films. Jews don't direct black American films. That might account for about 3 percent of the films that are made in this country. The other 97 percent—the action-adventure, horror, comedy, romance, suspense, western, or any combination of thereof, that the Hollywood and independent mills grind out—let it be every man for himself.

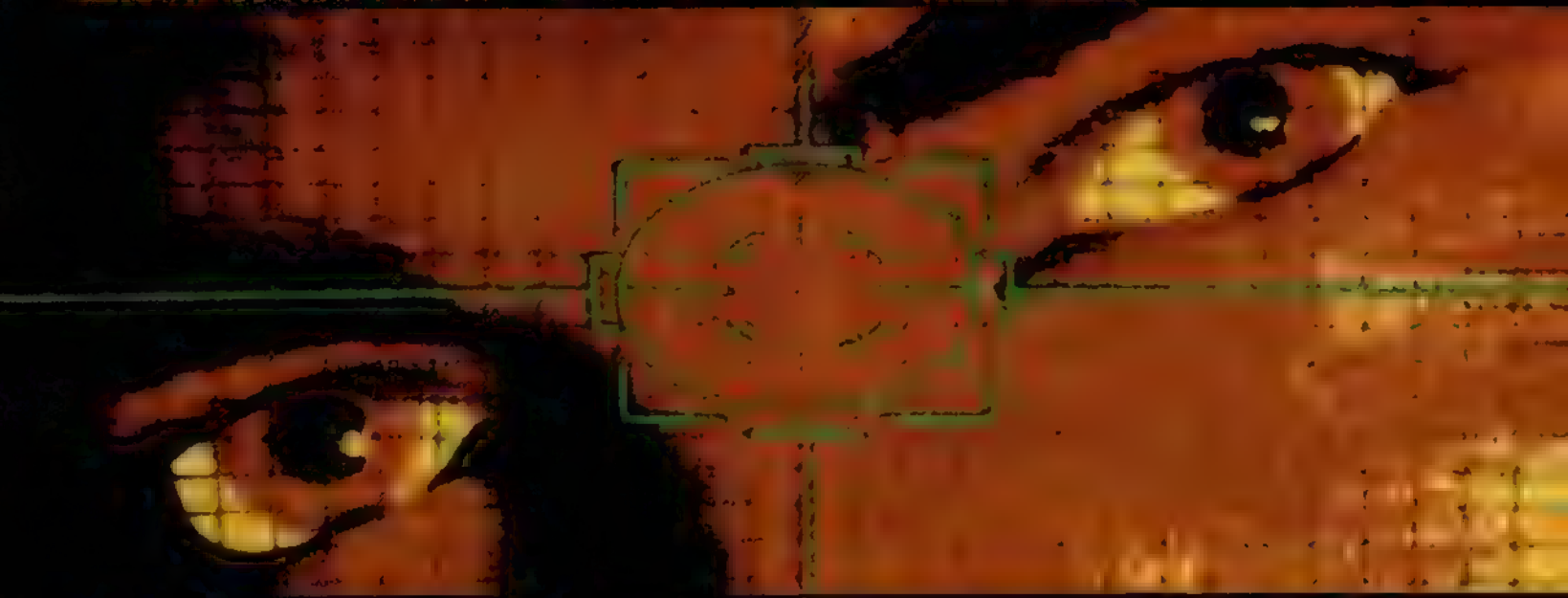
As I write this I am still waiting for Paramount to hire a director for the film *Fences*. I want somebody talented, who understands the play and sees the possibilities of the film, who would approach my work with the same amount of passion and measure of respect with which I approach it, and who shares the same cultural sensibilities of the characters. The last time I looked all those directors were black. I want to hire them just because of that.



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Visual Effects by IMAGE ANIMATION Special Effects by WARNEY JEFFREY Production Designer JOSEPH BENNETT Editor DEREK TRIGG Producer SIMON BOSWELL

Directed by STEVEN CHIVERS Co-Producers JAMES HAMILTON & JAMES HAMILTON

R PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 17  
WICKED FILMS  
JAMES HAMILTON & JAMES HAMILTON  
RICHARD STIMPY  
FILMS

OPENS SEPTEMBER 21st AT A THEATRE NEAR YOU. Material chronology pravem avtorizirani

# AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

**As AIDS levels off in the gay community, it is hitting the black and Hispanic populations full force. Tragically, the communities being hit hardest are the ones that are the least equipped to cope. CELIA FARBER reports from Harlem.**

It's 88 degrees in Harlem. A blue and white sign that says "Medicaid" hangs over one of the doorways at 125th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. Inside, 15 people are waiting in line, soaked in sweat, leaning against the dingy pale yellow wall. A Hispanic woman sitting behind the window inspects a gold chain, offered as payment. She shakes her head and beads of sweat roll down her temple. "Sorry," she says, and then hands it back to the man on the other side of the window, whose entire body is covered with track marks. The man punches the wall and stalks out, cursing. A piece of paper hanging on the glass window has "doctor" scrawled on it in black Magic Marker, and an arrow pointing toward the corridor. Another says, "This line for ulcer medicine." Down the corridor is the doctor's office. The "doctor" is wearing a dirty white coat with no M.D. tag. On a table in the corner, cartons of medications are piled up in disarray. An illustration of the intestinal tract is tacked up on the wall, the only indication that this room has something to do with health care.

They call these places "Medicaid mills." You'll see them all over Harlem, the Bronx, and the Lower East Side, packed sometimes, with lines down the block. People who have no health insurance come here to get prescription drugs which they often turn around and sell on the street. They are not quite legal, not quite illegal, run by people who are out to make a buck, visited by people who, more often than not, are dope addicts and reluctant to deal with any kind of officialdom.

"These places are disasters of the health care system," says Dean LaBate, Health Services administrator at the Ryan Community Health Center in New York. "They are like the hemorrhoids of the health care system. There is a strictly financial incentive for a person, a so-called physician, to work in a place like that. They don't provide any quality care whatsoever. They are there to get the patient in, maybe provide a service, maybe not. They give prescriptions based on I don't know what. It's outrageous. It's horrendous."

"For a lot of people with AIDS who have no insurance, their health care consists of lining up at these places to get their AZT," says Dwayne McKinley of the Minority Task Force on AIDS. "But even worse than that is that a lot of them turn right around and sell it. One capsule of AZT goes for up to ten dollars on the street."

"Now drug dealers are putting one capsule of AZT in every dime bag of heroin," says Keith Cylar, a black AIDS activist also on the Task Force. "It's like a bonus. It's like saying, 'Take this pill after you're done shooting up and you won't die.'"

A popular AIDS slogan says, "AIDS does not discriminate." What that means is that the virus doesn't care whether you're a homeless heroin addict or Rock Hudson. True enough, in this respect at least, AIDS is AIDS. But the slogan, belabored as it is, is all but meaningless in the actual world. The virus may

not discriminate, but society does—organizations do, governments do, hospitals do. Journalists do. We all do. Meanwhile

Over 60 percent of adult persons with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Over 85 percent of adult females with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Over 90 percent of babies and young children with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Over 85 percent of IV drug users with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Over one-third of homosexual men with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Yet these people are not part of what we call "the face of AIDS." You don't see pictures of them next to Elizabeth Taylor or see them on TV speaking at the opening of the International AIDS Conference. They don't sit on panels and have scrupulous catfights over the latest AIDS drugs. They don't fly around the world trying new treatments. They don't write plays and movies about what it feels like to have AIDS. They don't wear Silence = Death T-shirts or get arrested for tying up traffic. They don't go to HIV support groups, they don't

debate Anthony Fauci. They've probably never heard of Anthony Fauci.

They live and die in the shadow of all that—in a shooting gallery, a homeless shelter, or alone at home.

This summer, *People* magazine had a white, affluent 24-year-old woman on its cover with the headline, "AIDS: A Woman's Story." The woman, Ali Gertz, gazes out sadly, and in the first sentence we are told that she sleeps on lace sheets and reads poetry by Rilke. Ali Gertz is such an oddity, being a white, affluent, heterosexual female AIDS case, that she was catapulted to her peculiar, morbid fame almost immediately upon diagnosis—appearing on TV, lecturing across the country, planning a book collaboration with Mathilde Krim, etc. She is commended, pitied, and forgiven; the perfect AIDS symbol for the media. Gertz is the only type that will still sell magazines, yet ironically, she is on the distant periphery of the real story. For every white woman between the ages of 15 and 44 killed by AIDS, 10 black women in the same age group die. It was recently announced that AIDS is the leading killer of young black women in New York City. The *People* story covers six women, only one black, and she appears at the end, tacked on almost as an afterthought. Ali Gertz has not only the cover but her own feature.



Over 60 percent of adult persons with AIDS are black or Hispanic. For many, the odds are compounded by poverty, inadequate medical attention, and discrimination.



The source of fascination is plainly spelled out in large type at the opening of the story, which says that this case—a well-to-do New Yorker with AIDS—“should not have happened.” As opposed to what? Are we to assume that the black, female AIDS cases “should” have happened?

Keith Cylar is livid. “The media has created this myth that AIDS is a disease of gay, white men. But there is a whole other AIDS that nobody wants to read about. People don’t want to read about what it’s like to be homeless and black and have AIDS. Or what it’s like to go to a Medicaid mill, or sit in a clinic or an emergency room. Or to be living with three families in one apartment. Black AIDS is not the same as white AIDS. This disease is very different in our community. It fits within the context of our history of being disempowered and underserved. We’ve had to struggle with unemployment, high crime rates, drugs and the lack of drug treatment, poverty, inadequate housing. Those five or six issues are paramount. They’re classic, they’re true, they’re entrenched, and they have always been here. We have always gotten Band-Aid therapy. We’ve always gotten the leftovers of any kind of programmatic concerns. The lack of health care is abysmal.”

A study recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* determined that black men in Harlem have a higher mortality rate than men in Bangladesh. The risks were attributed not just to AIDS but to drugs, crime, and impoverished living conditions.

“There are many big problems,” says Dwayne McKinley. “One is lack of resources. We can’t always help people because we simply don’t have the money. We need to get our people into drug treatment programs and clinical trials for AIDS drugs, but they aren’t admitted into trials if they are using drugs.”

**“The media has created this myth that AIDS is a disease of gay white men, but there is a whole other AIDS that nobody wants to read about.”—Keith Cylar, black AIDS activist.**

Activist groups like ACT UP have sometimes managed to apply enough pressure through demonstrations to change or modify government AIDS policies. But the face of ACT UP, like the face of AIDS, is bright white. Keith Cylar is a member of ACT UP, and one of his main focuses has been to get the group to address more issues concerning people of color and AIDS. “ACT UP is a racist organization,” says Cylar. “I mean it’s as racist as any other organization or institution. Any time you get a group of people together who happen to be white men, who happen to be gay, there is a certain amount of racism present. But I don’t have a problem working with them or fighting with them. To simply label a group or person as racist doesn’t work in 1990 anymore. You have to go one step further and say, ‘This is exactly what you did, this is why it’s racist, and this is what you should do to correct it.’ We’ve done that in ACT UP and they’re getting better. All of our flyers, for instance, are translated into Spanish now. And ACT UP was one of the first activist groups who said universal health care is a right. They were also the first to point out that people of color were not

getting into clinical AIDS drug trials.

“You’ll always find people in ACT UP talking about the issues of people of color. But it’s not legitimate for somebody white to have a voice about people of color. We need more people of color saying these things. But people of color have been so disempowered for so long that activism isn’t even an option for most of them. If somebody’s struggling to get some kind of power in society, how’s it going to look for them to be sitting in the street tying up traffic?”

The problem, like most problems, has a dynamic all its own, which can be operating on a level beyond the reach of even the most well-intentioned help programs. There will always be, for instance, cultural currents that are very resistant to change. “Caribbean and Hispanic populations are the most difficult to convince to use a condom,” says J. Blair Durant, program coordinator of the HIV/AIDS Education and Outreach Program at the Ryan Center. “It’s the Madonna-and-whore syndrome, especially in Hispanic cultures, where women are totally subservient. Women are supposed to be sexually attractive and attract men, but once they do, they’re not supposed to have any sexual knowledge whatsoever. So if a woman asks her man to use condoms all of a sudden, he’s going to say she’s got some disease, or she’s a whore. I’ve heard of many cases where women have been abused and battered because they said, ‘Use a condom.’ This doesn’t exist so much with the Afro-American women. They’re more assertive. They’re more like, ‘Honey, you better get out of my face.’ [Laughs.] But in general, women of color do not believe they are at risk for AIDS. They’re still in that mode of thinking that only junkies and gay people get AIDS. And there’s a real machismo aspect, too. Homosexuality is culturally unacceptable for Hispanics and Afro-Americans.”

BON JOVI



**I** buzz apartment 5E at 625 West 152nd Street and a voice asks, "Who is it?" "We're here with your meal," I say. "God's Love We Deliver." "Come on up," says the voice.

God's Love We Deliver is a New York-based, privately funded charity organization that delivers hot, nutritionally balanced meals every day to a few hundred homebound people with AIDS. The group, which, despite its name, is not explicitly religious, was founded in 1985 by a woman named Ganga Stone, who first realized the problem people with AIDS can have feeding themselves after she attempted to take a bag of groceries to a young man debilitated by AIDS. She saw that he did not have the strength to even open a can of tuna, and that what he needed were fully prepared meals, delivered. By early 1986 she had launched Meals on Wheels, which had volunteers on foot delivering meals donated by restaurants. By 1987, it had grown into God's Love We Deliver. They opened their own kitchen, and today they feed about 300 homebound people with AIDS a day, with the help of 30 paid staff and 500 volunteers. Blacks and Hispanics make up 51.8 percent of their clients.

Jim, a God's Love We Deliver worker, and I climb the stairs to Carl's apartment. His door has Greenpeace, Save The Whales, and peace stickers on it. He opens the door with a big smile. We put the food on the kitchen table and go sit down in the living room. Carl is very thin and moves slowly, with a cane. But he laughs a lot, and exudes the energy of a spirited person. "How does my hair look?" he asks me, holding a hand to his copper-colored hair. "It looks fine," I tell him. "My hair turned white almost overnight," he says. "I dyed the stuff and it turned red, and now I'm a flaming red head." He chuckles. "I said to myself, 'Carl, you just can't win.'"

We sit down and Carl tells us how he used to go to bed hungry before he got hooked up with God's Love We Deliver. He had neither money for food nor energy to cook.

"I've only cried once since I got sick," Carl says. "It was when I got my food delivery one day. In the black community AIDS is taboo. I get completely ostracized. I get nasty phone calls from neighbors at night. I have gotten anonymous letters that say things like, 'Why don't you just go straight to the cemetery?' So anyway, one day, it was my birthday. When your birthday comes and you're getting old and you're dying, you get melancholy. So that day, the regular food was delivered and when I looked in the bag, there was a cake and a card that said 'Happy Birthday Carl.' And the tears just started rolling down. My mother didn't remember, not one person remembered that it was my birthday, but they did. I called up a friend and said 'Hey, come over and have a slice of my birthday cake.'"

"It's like the friends I don't have. My invisible friends. I don't feel alone anymore. I had a lot of friends before and now it's like the plague here. It's a mausoleum, my home, you know—very few people come by. I think the stigmatization of people with AIDS is much more prevalent in the black community. In this building for instance, in December, all the water was cut off for a week. Well, somebody told the plumbers that I had AIDS and they refused to come into the apartment. The management of the building had to get another firm to come and do it and they told that firm that I had prevented the plumbers from coming in. Sometimes, I'll be on my way to the elevator and the neighbors will see me and use the stairs. That hurts. So when the bell rings at a certain time and it's with that food and a smile, it helps me cope because I know somebody cares and the food gives me energy

"I understand the fear and ignorance of the neighbors—they just don't know. AIDS to them is a white person's disease. Blacks are not supposed to get AIDS. They haven't read about Africa and Haiti and how the highest targeted group now is young black women."

The apartment is neat and decorated with prints and wood sculptures from Africa, where Carl lived for a few years. Carl tells us he did his Master's in Human Behavior at Columbia, taught public school for twelve years, and was a counselor for twelve years. Carl has had all kinds of jobs.

"I was a whore and that's probably how I got AIDS. But I'm not ashamed of it." He smiles. "I'm just a free-spirited, fun-loving old fuck. I have my own way of coping and enjoying. I accept my imminent demise. I've done everything in life that I wanted to do, some good, some bad, but I did it. You name it, I have done it."

I ask Carl about treatment, and he walks me over to a bureau, opens the top drawer and pulls out a big bottle of AZT. "When I first came out of the hospital I could hardly walk because I was being so overmedicated. I said, 'Well to hell with this, I'm no fool. I feel better when I don't take the damn medicine.' So I cut down. People think the doctor is God and knows it all. But I don't. If you're giving me something to make me feel better and I feel worse, common sense tells me that's not right. My doctor had to admit that I was better educated about AIDS than he was."

When we say goodbye Carl asks Jim if God's Love We Deliver couldn't have a little social gathering for all of their clients. "I'm tired of being cooped up in here," Carl says. "I want to see some people." Jim says he'll look into it. He watches us as we walk down the hall. "Stay in touch ya hear?" Carl calls out. "I will," I promise, and disappear into the elevator.



Was it live?



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# Joie de Lee

Spike's sis tells it all to VERONICA WEBB.

I saw Joie Lee at the bus stop, plain as day, protected by two sheets of glass. She was frozen in a photographic state of grace. Glossed in the opalescent dew of tungsten light, her strong halo of curls spiraled their way toward heaven; her eyes were downcast, her arms spread like two denim wings. Transfixed for a moment, I wondered if she were ascending or descending, was this farewell or greeting? Whatever it was this black angel selling Gap jeans to Manhattan commuters was trying to say, it served to enhance the enigma of actress Joie Lee.

When I telephoned Joie for this interview I didn't know what to expect: an airtight media-ready professional or the gypsy woman that Curtis Mayfield sang about in the song of the same name. I found neither one. Instead, I was presented with a lively, unassuming woman, someone taking the journey to Hollywood in gentle, even strides.

The film-going public first became familiar with Joie in 1986's groundbreaking, and by independent-film standards, blockbuster film *She's Gotta Have It*, directed by Joie's brother, Spike Lee. In the last four years she's made five films. Three of them have been family projects: *School Daze*, *Do The Right Thing*, and the most recent release from 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks in conjunction with Universal Pictures, *Mo' Better Blues*.

"When I was little my parents always encouraged me to act," Joie says. "They were never daunted by the fact that there were so few black images on screen. One day—I must have been about five or six—I was up in my room after having seen *Oliver*. I was leaning out the window singing *Oliver*'s song in the movie; Spike busted in and started screamin' laughin'. He pointed at me like I was the funniest thing he had ever seen in his life. Spike must have been ten or eleven. I was so humiliated. Spike was so horrible to me. I was having a private moment and Spike had to catch me. I kept on singing and acting and never let my brothers see what I was doing. I recently reminded Spike of the incident. All he had to say was, 'No, I didn't. No, I didn't.' " Joie can't help but laugh. "He denies the

**Joie is aesthetically unique  
in American cinema—the  
Gechee woman in a head-on  
collision with the fly-girl.**

whole thing, but I was damaged by that. It's ironic the way things turned out."

Joie's work with her brother, who is fast becoming the pope of polemics in American cinema, seems to take on the role of the benevolent black Madonna that inhabits her brother's imagination. Whether her character is the mindful conscience to *Do The Right Thing*'s disgruntled Mookie, or the long-suffering school teacher Indigo to Denzel Washington's rogue of a Casanova in *Mo' Better Blues*, she is the eternal incarnation of the good girl. What gives this good girl her twist is that she divorces herself from the stereotypi-

She's Gonna Get It: Joie Lee.



cal images that actresses of her complexion and physicality have oftentimes been relegated.

Joie is natural, beautiful, and black. She is aesthetically unique in American cinema—the Gechee woman in a head-on collision with the fly-girl. "My mother was my role model. All my style—everything—comes from her. When *She's Gotta Have It* came out, people were hooting and hollering at me like I was country or something. I've always had to deal with that, because I've always been different. Spike has always written roles with me in mind, so there's been freedom of expression on screen, but what you see on screen is tame, because it's not me. [Watch for the toe ring and the belly bead in *Mo' Better Blues*'s love scenes.] I don't want people to associate me with some kind of persona. I want to be associated with the character I'm trying to play.

"People have trouble casting me. It's not as bad now as it was a few years ago. I'd like to break all the standards as an actress, and as a black actress. I'd like to bring a different image to the public. I want to see something other than what I've seen. Insightful portraits of black women. I'm only one person, but I'd like to perform in every genre of film: sci-fi, gangster, comedy. There are so many barriers to be broken down." I try to imagine Joie stepping out of her cinematic goody two-shoes. "I suppose I would have to play a whore—that would be a radical departure from what I'm doing now. But I don't know if I would want to play that kind of stereotypical, sexually exploitative role. It depends on the quality of the project and the content of the role. Tralala, Jennifer Jason Leigh's character in *Last Exit to Brooklyn*—that was a great part. I'd like to do some-

thing like that, but I wouldn't want to get stuck doing it either."

*A Kiss Before Dying*, a psycho-thriller starring Matt Dillon and directed by James Dearden (screenwriter of *Fatal Attraction*) is Joie Lee's latest project. "Working with James was a challenge," she says. "Usually when I make a film it's a family situation where I know just about everybody. Establishing an on-screen relationship with Sean Young, that was something new to me, as we were complete strangers before we worked together."

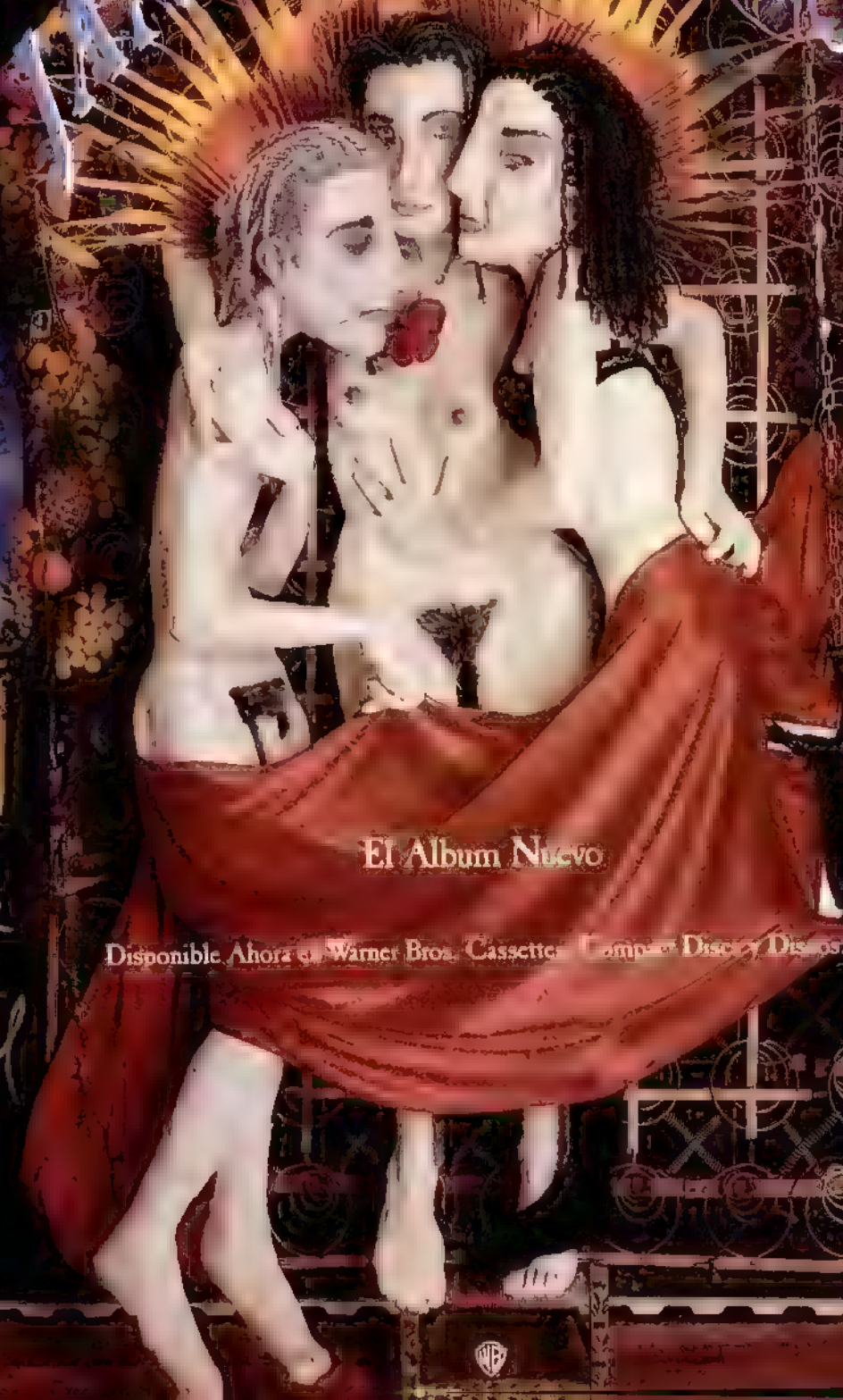
Joie treasures the relationships she creates with the other characters. "Doing Indigo in *Mo' Better Blues* stretched me out. I've never had a love interest in a film before; it was a difficult relationship to work out." In the movie it does seem almost illogical that Indigo would take Bleek, her lover, back. "Spike left the scene basically unrehearsed, afraid it might burn out. She took him back, well, because have you ever been in love? It creates a range of emotion that is just not logical."

What the future holds? "My younger brother, Cinque, and I are shopping around a television pilot that we developed for children. We were atypical kids, so it's something that I think I would have liked to have seen as a child." And beyond that? "I'd like to find some stability as an actress. I'd like to have my own production company in the next five to ten years, a multimedia ensemble company. I'd like to own the rights to a lot of things. I'd like to be writing my own projects. I'd really like to write something for Spike." Joie pauses for a moment as if she can just picture it. "I'd really like to write something for Spike." ☺



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# SPINS



EDITED BY  
JIM GREER

**Deee-Lite**  
**World Clique**  
Elektra

hey're here! The Big Apple's much-acclaimed interstellar dancefloor travelers have at last designed to dip their platformed toes into the mainstream. And how. Since signing with Elektra, this multicultural East Village trio have blossomed spectacularly, following up a stunning series of live shows with the debut album of the year. *World Clique* is everything Deee-Lite promised and more, an eloquent tableau of '90s possibilities. It's fabulous. In fact, it's postfabulous.

And by calling their production company Sampladelic, the group has succeeded where countless scribes have failed in putting a name to that certain something in the air—the ethos that links the digital Robin



Hoods of the late 20th, from Public Enemy to De La Soul to 808 State.

This band does not, however, indulge in the common practice of sampling hooks—their strength is that they can write 'em. In producing themselves, Deee-Lite keep the affair on a human scale, showing commendable restraint at the sonic smorgasbord offered by sampling; in future years *World Clique* will not lend itself to the kind of musical carbon-dating by which experts can pinpoint the week in which a dance record was made.

The lewd instrumental funk of the "Deee-Lite Theme" kicks the session into effect, hotly followed by "Good Beat" and "Power of Love," a pair of lusty house romps which set the tempo for the majority of *World Clique*'s duration. House's self-imposed parameters often make it, like blues, more of a chore than a pleasure, but Deee-Lite employ these structures to focus their energy and reach a new dimension.

The house flavor predominates, but each dance style the band turns its hand to is exquisitely rendered: "Smile On," the album's sole downtempo excursion, gives an all-too-brief glimpse of what these gentle people can do with a blessed out, hot-Sly-in-the-summertime groove; in turn, the Kraftwerk-on-Ecstasy explosion of "What Is Love" is just as persuasive as "Groove Is in the Heart" 's guitar-driven funk, and when Q-Tip comes on the latter it seems unsurprising, a natural development.

In fact, much is being said here about

the supposed mutual exclusivity of "natural" and "organic" music. The only organic sounds to be heard on *World Clique* are guest shots from veterans Bootsy Collins, Fred Wesley, and Maceo Parker, but nonetheless every track swings like an elephant's balls.

And don't make the mistake of dismissing these guys as mere pranksters just because of their overwhelming fondness for man-made fibers; singer Miss Kier, the band's Pucci princess, has more soul power in her pinky ring than a truckload of retro-nuevo wailers, more righteousness than a crèche full of strumming sisters in Birkenstock sandals.

With the title tune the band make their big statement, a gorgeous cascade of global goodwill, a politically correct nursery rhyme.

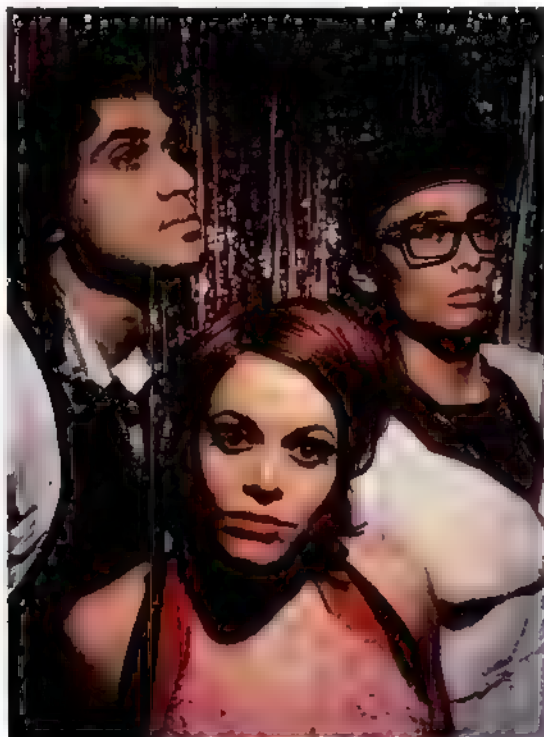
"We don't need a clique  
To make our clock tick  
Our clique is the world  
The world is our clique."

Unlike many of those getting with the One World/One Love program, Deee-Lite never come across as mush-mouthed hippie throwbacks, probably because of their bizarrely fragmented backgrounds and their unembarrassed love affair with urban American culture.

There's unlikely to be another dance record as forward-looking in 1990, and the odds of any rock artist besting this all-killer-no-filler outing are long indeed.

It's a beautiful thing.

Steven Daly



Pure Deee-lite, from left: Super DJ Dmitry, Lady Miss Kier, Jungle DJ Towa Towa.



## Living Colour *Time's Up* Epic

"I'm tellin' ya, man," my buddy sllobbered when Living Colour's debut album came out. "They're the black Rush."

"Get outta here, dude," I said. "Vernon Reid got a big break when Mick used him on his solo album. Rolling Stone and the Voice puffed him up. Their songs are about old ladies who cross the street when weirdos walk behind them on the sidewalk. The lead singer wears near bike shorts. And Vernon—yo man, back when he still wrote for the Voice, I had to tell him to put Keith LeBlanc on his Top 10 in the critics' poll. So I mean, how cool can he be? Plus, dude, he's one of these Afrocentric types. He'd never admit to liking Rush."

"All I'm saying, dude, is that they're purty hot."

True, Vernon Reid had said *Houses of the Holy* was one of his favorite albums as a kid, and yes, it certainly had been nice in the sweltering clubs during the summer of '89 to hear "Cult of Personality" cut through the Gypsy Kings—"Bambaleo"—and all the other dancefloor ra cha coca. "And dude," my buddy added with finality, "Neil Pearl of Rush likes 'em, too. So there."

Even so, it wasn't until members of Living Colour showed up backstage at a Rush concert in L.A. last spring that I realized my friend had been right. "We love you guys," Vernon himself allegedly told Neil with a spooky intensity to match the drummer's own legendary seriousness. "You proved it could be done." Proved? It? What the heck? The leaders of the Black Rock Coalition praising the last guardians of the prog-rock aberration?

"You can't be serious," said another friend when I told him the backstage anecdote. "Oh yeah?" So I popped the new Living Colour cassette, *Time's Up*, into the tape deck, and whaddya know? Halfway through the opening (title) track, a chunk of vintage Rush comes hurtling out of the hardcore/funk metal/jazz fusion melee. "My God," my friend said,

amazed, "that's 'Cygnus X-1,' Book Two!"

Actually it was from Book One, but he had the right idea. For in addition to other musical footnotes (Muzz Skillings' subterranean bass drone and William Colhoun's righteous rota-tom fills at the beginning of "This Is The Life"), both the lyrics ("a wise man said to know thyself / cos in the end there's no one else") and even the bloomin' song titles ("Information Overload") seem to be steeped in that Rush-ian one-naked-dude-against-the-collective thang.

Accordingly, Living Colour also fall into the same sonic booby traps that Rush often do. For one thing, there's simply too much rifferama—middle 8s become middle 64s and maim some of the best, otherwise normal cuts like "Information Overload" and "This Is The Life." Other songs crumble under their own weight, especially "Under Cover of Darkness," which bites off more than it can chew with a psychedelic intro, funk verses, rap break, and a strange, L.A.-meets-Lower East Side, George Benson-meets-James "Blood" Ulmer jazz guitar solo. A monument to outlandish overarrangement, it's four songs in one. Which is great, but perhaps only to someone with a Rush-baked brainbox.

Of course there's a lot more to Living Colour than their similarities to an uncool power trio. And for every bit of progress excess on *Time's Up* there's an almost equal amount of dutiful post-punk restraint on "Solace of You," "Type," and, in particular, the playful pop blues, "Love Rears Its Ugly Head" (which is lead singer Corey Glover's finest moment and is destined to become a hit single).

The point remains that, even more than Prince, Vernon Reid and Co. may be the most important black artists since Hendrix because of their ability to reach the same white adolescent pizza faces that the heavy metal honkies do. By succeeding where the Bus Boys, Bad Brains, Fishbone, 24-7 Spyz, and other black rock acts have foundered, Living Colour have, along with Faith No More, Jane's Addiction, and Guns N' Roses, made metal hip and good again.

If Elvis stole rock from the blacks (see "Elvis Is Dead"), Living Colour have stolen that music right back. They've realized that white hard rock is part of their culture, too, and—in the ultimate act of revenge and subversion—they've used it to their advantage. And to great effect. This, not the calculated Oreo pop of Michael Jackson and Prince, is the stuff of true crossover dreams.

Bob Mack

Lee "Scratch" Perry  
*From the Secret Laboratory*  
Mango

**Shinehead**  
**The Real Rock**  
 Elektra

Slaying awake is a priority, so I generally like talked reggae more than sung reggae, secular reggae more than Rasta reggae. But now that the silly song-quotes and lunar electrobeats of dancehall style have devolved toward languid Soul II Soul Sunday school sloganeering, precisely the sort of dime-a-dozen dogoodism dancehall's sensi-crazed rago-



muffins first set out to demolish, where can a guy go for twisted posttoasting kicks?

Well, you can go to the source—for instance, to Lee Perry, who's been masterminding rap-reggae in one guttural form or another ever since the sound-system dances he threw in Jamaica in the late '50s. Within the next decade he'd helped found Studio One Records, brainstorming a *musique concrete* concept where most any old thing (gunshots, babies, intercepted FM signals, breaking glass) could season the noise-collage. So he helped invent dub, helped invent *Einstürzende Neubauten*, helped invent *MA/R/R/S*, helped invent the jackhammers and national anthem in Slaughter's "Up All Night," and the dumpster solo in Bryan Adams's "Ain't Gonna Cry." And then he became pals with the Clash.

Lately, Lee's been linking up with Adrian Sherwood, whose megadub productions are usually interesting but hardly ever compelling, and it seems Sherwood's helping Lee revive a lost sound while Lee provides Adrian with a personality. From *The Secret Laboratory* mostly forgoes the antic conspiracy rants of 1987's *Time Bomb De Devil Dead* for more playful ideas (though Lee does threaten to take over ITT and SDI and CBS in "Vibrate On"), and at first I preferred the new humor to the old paranoia. Now I think *Laboratory* isn't quite claustrophobic enough, but that doesn't mean I'll complain about the Inspector Gadget song.

Nor will my 5-year-old son Luis, who requests it almost as much as "World of the Video Game," the arcade-bipitating Super Mario smash on Shinehead's *The Real Rock*, the other plate of toast I've



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You'll peak when you experience the ten mind-blowing dub remixes from **BLACK UHURU**'s "NOW DUB" album. Includes the dance remix of "Reggae Rock" from Eng and's hottest rub-a-dub dance mixer, *A Guy Called Gerald*. Nirvana!

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## BLACK UHURU TOUR DATES

Sept 10th	Minneapolis, MN	1st Avenue
Sept 12th	Boulder, CO	Co Univ., CU Field House
Sept 14th	San Carlos, CA	Circle Star Theatre
Sept 15th	Santa Cruz, CA	S.C. Civic Auditorium
Sept 16th	Los Angeles, CA	Greek Theatre
Sept 19th	Phoenix, AZ	Club Rios
Sept 20th	San Diego, CA	Starlight Bowl Amphitheater
Sept 21st	Santa Barbara, CA	Santa Barbara Co. Bowl
Sept 22nd	Santa Rosa, CA	Luther Burbank Center
Sept 23rd	Anaheim, CA	Celebrity Theatre



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been nibbling lately—nice guy Shine gets addicted to Nintendo, just like Linus and me! I loved this buzz-cut Bronxite's *Unity* LP two years ago, pshawed viciously when the entire dancehall nation called it a sellout, wondered how anybody could resist such crooked verbal-corner-turning, not to mention the prettiest singing by any rapper ever. Sadly, *The Real Rock* reminds me what Leo Durocher said about nice guys.

Like he did in last winter's "Reggae Christmas Medley," Shine's going through the motions. There's a Married With Children cover, more beautiful crooning, even reggae's first antismoking editorial, fine. But Madonna's "Keep It Together" had gallons more Sly-juice than Shine's "Family Affair," and "Dance Down the Road" smells like 1990 Elton John. And with none of *Unity*'s rough and rugged edges, this time out the positivity sermons make me queasy. I'm still glad Shinehead's his own man; I just wish he weren't so wishy-washy about it, y'know what I mean?

Chuck Eddy

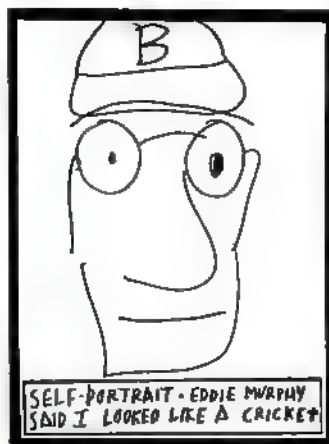
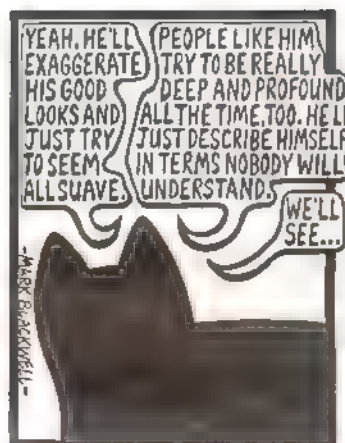
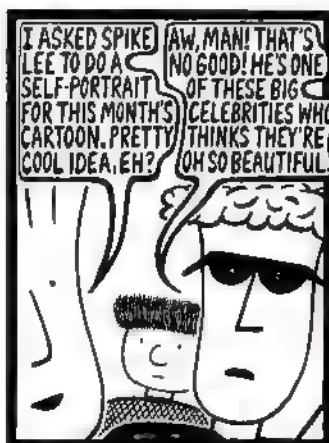


## 24-7 Spyz Gumbo Millennium In-Effect

You may think you've dropped the needle on a Metallica album when the opening track ("John Connelly's Theory") of 24-7 Spyz's new disc, *Gumbo Millennium*, assaults your ears. But don't get carried away—this album is like a good party: Anything can happen and if you stick around long enough, it probably will. Singer Peter Fluid, guitarist Jim Hazel, bassist Rick Skatore, and drummer Anthony "Bigfoot" Johnson rock you through a landscape of metal madness,

## LITTLE SUTTY'S QUEST FOR MUSIC

by Mark Blackwell and Spike Lee



funky rap grooves, reggae, and jazz. These guys are wacked, but lest you think that they're just out for a good time, listen closely to the lyrics. Metal with a message? Can't really peg it that easily, but the original title of this record was Woodstock 90 until the Spyz got word that Warner Bros. would be releasing a compilation album of the same name. Hence the title *Gumbo Millennium*, which to my mind conveys exactly the combination of mayhem and message that makes this piece of vinyl a kick in the ass.

You can pick out a lot of Van Halen-ish guitar licks, especially on songs like "Racism," which is the closest this album comes to in-your-face punk, then the Spyz quickly downshift into some jazzy riffs on "We Got a Date," and just to remind everyone of their sense of humor, there's a just-plain-silly song called "Spyz on Pi-ano." Fluid's vocals are anything but, although you get the feeling that he could smooth out the rough edges if he wanted. But why bother? He goes through a series of vocal gymnastics guaranteed to keep listeners on their toes. He hits the highs and the lows and sometimes he misses altogether, but that's really half the fun. With this stew, 24-7 Spyz definitely serve up some righteous good times.

Lauren Spencer

# Boogie Down Productions *Edutainment* Jive/RCA

In the late '80s, hip hop fulfilled its promise to politicize black urban culture. Standard gear shifted from gold chains to African medallions; standard lyrics from boasting to black national sm. Now the groups behind the revolutionary transformation face an even trickier challenge: how to shape this mass into a



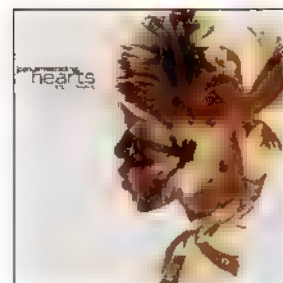
movement, to use hip hop as a base for a new black nationalist politics for the '90s.

So far, the best candidate for emerging out of hip hop to lead a generation is Blastmaster KRS-ONE of Boogie Down Productions. Now on his fourth album, *Edutainment*, KRS-ONE has staked out a position as a rapper of honesty, compassion, and toughness. Cuts on *Edutainment* cover the neglected history of African civilization, analyze different forms of racism, and dis-

blacks who deny their heritage by imitating white features through such tricks as straightening their hair or lightening their skin ("Are you proud of who you are/Or does your pride come out of a jar?"). *Edutainment* does contain one violent revenge fantasy, "100 Guns," in which KRS-ONE and his crew happily ice a bunch of racist police. But the violence in BDP songs, although relished, is always in self defense; the man behind the "Stop the Violence" movement in hip hop is no NWA-style hypocrite (if Digital Underground, Young MC, and Ice-T are really all in the same gang with Eazy-E, I'd advise them to watch their backs).

Although KRS-ONE remains one of hip hop's most engaging and expressive rappers, his often minimal arrangements can sometimes get tiresome; on several cuts he simply raps over drum tracks. KRS-ONE may be hip hop's first revolutionary ascetic—it seems as if the sparseness of his music is supposed to be proof of his integrity, and at one point on the album he even brags about how his concert equipment is "the cheapest." But in BDP's best work—including about half the stuff on *Edutainment*—KRS-ONE allows the pleasures of a fuller mix and a catchy chorus. Either way, BDP may not succeed in freeing my ass every time, but my mind's almost always ready to follow.

Ted Friedman



# Joan Armatrading *Hearts and Flowers* A&M

In 1988, Joan Armatrading was bedeviled by so many Tracy Chapman comparisons that she began to claim she had never heard the youngster's record. Armatrading had earned the right to be miffed: She's been making albums since 1973, singing her songs with a large, generous voice. Her lyrics sometimes drift into the twin folkie traps of pedestrian and pompous, but at Armatrading's best, her husky throat transforms everyday feelings into the noble emotions to which we aspire.

"Promise Land," the best song on *Hearts and Flowers*, balances on the preci-

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piece of a relationship. Armatrading confesses her love, desire swelling in her throat. But every few lines, she growls an aside like "Not really" or "Now, wait a minute," spoken with such strength that we know she controls the relationship (and the song). By the time she slides into the chorus, we're reliving the ecstasy of a new love, and forgetting the sweaty fear.

*Hearts and Flowers* has some bold spots. Like "More Than One Kind of Love," an anthem which boldly tells us that friends are important. It's hard not to yawn at this sentiment, and even harder with Armatrading's bland session musicians. The interplay between organ and guitar on "Can't Let Go" sparkles like nothing else on the record; Armatrading plays both instruments. Unfortunately, on three songs, she doesn't play at all. Too much of *Hearts and Flowers* neglects Joan Armatrading's understanding of her own bottomless voice. When she accompanies that voice with her pealing guitar, the sound is far more eloquent than her lyrics could ever be.

**Gravin Edwards**

**Sonny Boy Williamson,  
Memphis Slim, Big Bill  
Broonzy**  
*Blues in the Mississippi Night*  
Rykodisc

**T**he blues shouldn't be about some 13-year-old white kid named Smokin' Joe Bonamassa playing superfast Stevie Ray Vaughn ticks, or some debased Low

up of the real. In 1946, the great archivist Alan Lomax gathered together Sonny Boy Williamson, Memphis Slim, and Big Bill Broonzy in New York's Decca Studios. Lomax said, "Tell me what the blues is about," and shut up as Broonzy led his buddies on an extended rap about being black, poor, and exploited in the deep South. Their long, animated conversation is punctuated by the guys playing various tunes, as well as examples of spirituals and field hollers that Lomax mixes in. There's not a lot of music but it's very good, especially Lomax's prerecorded ring shouts and Memphis Slim's roughshod boogie-woogie on "Fast Boogie." The sound quality is quite good, though Memphis Slim's piano tends to drown out Sonny Boy's harp and Broonzy's guitar.

But the real pleasure here is the strong, intelligent, and playful voices of these men. Their lives spill through their raspy words even more directly than through their music: the women, the mules, the juke joints, the work camps, the corn whiskey, the tall tales. There's the story about finding worms in their gruel, and the one about Mr. White, who removed anything black—including mules and pigs—from his property. The snatches of music the men play become part of this flow of stories, and more than anything, the disc grounds the blues in the mud of history. As Memphis Slim says about another bluesman, "he was signifyin' and getting his revenge through songs." *Blues in the Mississippi Night* is about that signifyin', and why it was necessary.

**Erik Davis**

**The Neville Brothers**  
*Brother's Keeper*  
A&M



**W**hat made the Nevilles' '89 breakthrough hit *Yellow Moon* sound so good was that it was easy-listening that connected. Producer Daniel Lanois took the edges off the music, but then made everything deeper; you didn't feel compelled to listen closely, but if you did you sank right in. And what swallowed you up was in large part a civil rights/nostalgia trip, recent social upheaval as a sensual groove, with a cast of lovingly remembered icons—Rosa Parks, Sam Cooke, early Bob Dylan—giving heft to the celebration.

Lanois didn't produce *Keeper* (though *Moon* engineer Malcolm Burn does return as coproducer) and the result is an overall, less coherent sound. Though that particular sparseness which allows the bass and low-end tones to breathe occasionally appears, there's still a lot of more-cluttered

and Order chord progression, or some fat, bearded guy growling on Sunday night college radio. But in some sense it is, in part because the real Southern roots of the music are blanketed in myth like kudzu, myth that has as much to do with white images of blacks as with the actual experiences undergone by blues performers.

*Blues in the Mississippi Night* rips through that myth with some hard-core reality, while simultaneously laying it on even thicker, because the myth is made

effects that Lanois, who keeps an iron hand on the understatement lever, wouldn't have gone for. But the sounds tell nicely. The group's cover of "Mystery Train" is typical of the kind of sure-handed conjuring they excel at—the old chestnut chugs along, two kinds of gritty guitar sound working out over a thumping bass, soulful, if restrained, vocals on top. It might not get you out of your seat but it feels just fine.



Their cover of Leonard Cohen's "Bird On A Wire," on the other hand, is a bust, and points to a less happy tendency, that of the Bros to be consciously "uplifting." "Bird" is one of Cohen's best sketches, that of an emotional wreck begging for one last chance, warning, through his imagery, that he's not necessarily to be trusted. The Nevilles bypass all this ambiguity (and edit out the part about the prostitute), focus on the word "free" (it becomes a background vocal chant), and basically make one remember, fondly, the days when Joe Cocker could still roar with uncouth conviction.

So who buys a Neville Brothers album for the lyrics? The group's signature sound remains seductive, its highlight being Aaron's soft, quavering falsetto—pleasingly melodramatic and, at times, pleasantly weird. And its signature achievement is that of a group dealing out a bunch of influences with a ton of experience. It's uneven, but it could have been a lot worse—for a group on the cusp of continuing platinum, they've managed not to lose their cool.

Richard C. Wells

### The Time Pandemonium Paisley Park

On "Dream and," the intro to the Time's long-awaited reunion album, *Pandemonium*, a snoring Morris Day (the band's lead singer/fashion plate) is

roused from apparent hibernation (perhaps a reference to his somnambulant solo LP, *Daydreaming*) by a ringing phone. Notified that there's trouble down at his club, he arrives on the scene to discover the turntables spinning what sounds like a parody of bad house music. Outraged, Morris orders the music stopped. The needle skids off the record. "Y'all really wanna dance? Hit it." And as a bass note swoops down, the band kicks into the keyboard-driven groove of the title track.

The Time are on a Rip Van Winkle trip, reawakening to bring 1990 a refreshing dose of vintage funk. Nobody else plays this sort of stuff any more. Time members Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis know this, of course, and are hardly reactionaries; they spent the interregnum inventing modern techno-dance-pop on Janet Jackson's *Control* and *Rhythm Nation 1814*. But now they're back to jamming with a band, and somehow the familiar grooves don't come off as nostalgia trips. They work because in an era when butts are most often moved by engineers cutting and pasting on their Macs, the chance to hear a group of musicians in step with each other, getting off on each other's skill, is a rare and much-needed pleasure. The way Jesse Johnson's chicken-scratch guitar meshes with the unstoppable basslines and tasty keyboard licks reminds us that music-making can still be a collective experience.



Of course, when the Time gets back to basics, they're talking 1983, not 1966. At one point on "Chocolate," Morris does one of his James Brown bits, asking for the band to break it down and bring in some horns. On cue, we hear the horn sounds—unmistakably produced by a synthesizer that could pass for Thomas Dolby's. In this post plastic, Soul II Soul era, faked instruments are supposed to be passé—if you don't want to record the real thing, the least you could do is sample it. In this context, the Time's atavistic synths are liberatingly unnatural. Like candy bars in a health food store, they deliciously remind us what we've been missing.

Ted Friedman

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### Therapy.

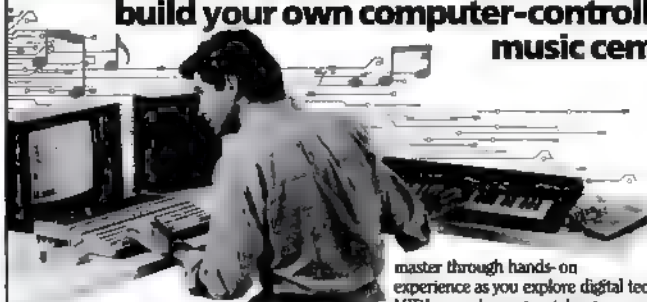


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# TOP 20 WORLD BEAT ALBUMS

1. **Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful**  
Johnny Clegg & Savuka  
Capitol
2. **Mosaique** The Gipsy Kings  
Elektra
3. **Two Worlds One Heart**  
Ladysmith Black Mambazo  
Warner
4. **Puzzle of Hearts** Ojavan CBS
5. **Live!** Ruben Blades Elektra
6. **Koubit!** Burning Rhythms of  
Haiti A&M
7. **Passion Sources** Various Real  
World
8. **Pamber!** Bhundu Boys  
Mango
9. **Pota's Fever** Mano Negra  
Virgin
10. **Mlah** Les Negresses Vertes  
Sire
11. **Volume Two** Le Mystere Des  
Voix Bulgares Nonesuch
12. **World Beat!** Kaoma CBS
13. **Beasts of No Nation** Fela  
Anikulapo Kuti Shanachie
14. **Now** Black Uhuru Mesa
15. **Yuan Goyo** Brothers Shung  
Tian Real World
16. **Paris Soweto** Mahlatini &  
The Mahotella Queens Polydor
17. **O Samba** Brazil Classics II  
Various Sire
18. **Salam** Toure Kunda Trema
19. **"Say What?"** Various  
Rounder
20. **Calypso Season** Various  
Rounder

Compiled by  
Ken Micallef  
121 MacDougal St., #182  
New York, NY 10012



## Eric B. & Rakim Let The Rhythm Hit 'Em MCA

With the first two albums, Eric B. & Rakim emerged as the undisputed leaders of humorous, hard-core hip hop. Rakim, the gangster guru, simultaneously preached about inner peace and blowin' off heads, while Eric B.'s wax workouts rocked the house. Their super-heavy funk raided James Brown and Shafit, and Rakim's unflappable Zen-like focus has made him the scariest figure in a genre bursting with scary figures.



Rakim's devastating rapid-fire delivery has lost none of its edge. "In The Ghetto" is a dynamic out-of-body experience that sees Rakim visit various parts of the world, including Mecca and South Africa, as a mental escapee from the inner city, sort of a Superfly-meets-Grasshopper from Kung Fu. "Set 'Em Straight" attempts to dispel the drug rumors that even had Ra doing time at Rikers. His answer? "If I was in jail, it won't be for sellin' keys / It'll be for murderin' MC's." As for humility, check out the ode to a woman named "Mahogany," who "rubs my chest and calls me 'Mr. Sexy' / She said she wants to have my kids and help me make my next G."

Eric B.'s murky grooves are still funky, too. The wavy nervous undercurrents on the title track, the intricate orchestrations on "Step Back," and the wondrously simple jazz samples on "Untouchables," all anchor Rakim to the beat. Eric's Sgt. Pepper-ish arrangements on "Mahogany" redeem that tune, and "In The Ghetto" sounds like "What's Goin' On"-era Marvin Gaye co-opted by Mike Tyson.

Let The Rhythm Hit 'Em is no great departure from Eric B. & Rakim's previous work. Thus, it's hard to tell if this record is a continuation of a well-focused commitment or the first step into the tar pits of d.n.s.a.u.r.d.o.m.

Lance Gould

## The Winans Return Quest/WB

Gospel singers par excellence, the Winans—who have won more Grammys and various other awards than they probably have shelf space for—went out and got Teddy Riley for their new record (as one of several coproducers). Now Teddy might go to church daily, but as the mastermind behind Guy, he sure a n't known for pious rhythms. The Winans take those four soulful voices of theirs, Teddy twirls a few knobs, and the result is one of the hippest, tightest—all the words ending in est—gospel albums ever. Return cooks.

It's no secret that the Winans are part of one of the big families of gospel, but they haven't watered down their message for mass (no pun intended) consumption. When these bros talk about frenos (which they do often) it's with a capital F. If overt praising makes you uncomfortable, this may not be the platter for you. Me, I don't care. When you've got a smoky set o' pipes like Marvin Winans, reminiscent of early Teddy Pendergrass, beautiful brotherly harmonies (check out the gorgeous "A Friend," with its lilting overlapping chorus, or the so-fine "Wherever I Go") getting in a little plug or ten for the executive producer is allowed. The disc slides and sways between Riley's church-of-the-street-corner thump ("It's Time," featuring Mr. Riley testifying) to a Quiet Storm / Anita Baker / make-out thang.



Return is old-time religion married to right-now technology, and like any good union, both parties are enhanced. The songs are passionate (these guys mean every word they sing, make no mistake). They know what to do with what they have, yet still make it heartfelt and immediate. Throughout the disc is a tremendous sense of calm, even when the funk starts flying. The Winans' faith comes shining through the tracks, enveloping you in a feel-good, get-down groove. It's enough to make a believer out of even the most jaded soul.

Amy Linden

# BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL



## Sarah Vaughan

BY SPENCER HARRINGTON

One October evening in 1942, a skinny girl with a gap between her front teeth sang "Body and Soul" at an amateur contest in Harlem's Apollo Theatre. She was shy and her teeth were chattering from fright, but when she opened her mouth a big, splendid sound came out. She was awarded the ten dollars and a week's engagement at the Apollo. That evening would also lead to her first professional gig. Billy Eckstine, a singer with the Earl "Fatha" Hines Orchestra, was cashing a check at the theater when he heard her. Six months later she was hired at his recommendation as a singer and second pianist with the Hines Orchestra. Sarah Vaughan was 19 years old.

From that time until her death on April 3 of this year, Vaughan's career was never in doubt. Known as "Sassy" and "Divine Sarah," she had no peer among jazz singers of her generation, except perhaps for Ella Fitzgerald, who once called her "the greatest singing talent in the world." Gunther Schuller, the composer and jazz historian, ranked Vaughan with such bravura opera singers as Maria Callas and Cesare Siepi. Her arsenal of vibratos, her three-octave range, her total control over dynamics and pitch were among her operatic gifts, yet she had the ear and canny improvisational skill of a jazz singer.

In a strangely prescient move, CBS Records two years ago reissued 28 of the 60 sides Vaughan recorded for Columbia between 1949 and 1953, and this year repackaged 12 of those 28 for their Collectors' Series, under the title *After Hours With Sarah Vaughan*. While both collections are available in most retail outlets, the 28-song *The Divine Sarah Vaughan: The Columbia Years 1949-1953* (C2K-44165) is by far the better choice. Eight tracks on this two-disc set, unrepresented on *After Hours*, feature Vaughan in a small group setting with Miles Davis where she is heard to her best advantage.

Vaughan was a "musician's singer," which means that she used her voice like an instrument, borrowing her phrasing from bebop horn players to create swooping and soaring improvisations. Her early association with the Hines Orchestra and later the Billy Eckstine big band allowed her to study the fledgling bebop of Charlie Parker



Divine Sarah—"the greatest singing talent in the world."

and Dizzy Gillespie, instrumentalists in both bands. "I like horns," she told an interviewer. "When I was singing with the [Hines] band, I always wanted to imitate the horns. Parker and Gillespie, they were my teachers. I usually listen to the instrumentalists more than to other singers."

Not surprisingly, Vaughan was the first female jazz singer to adapt to bebop's improvisational freedom, an adjustment aided by an evolved harmonic ear she acquired from playing the piano. Bop gave her the liberty to explore the richness of her voice, to show everyone she was the world's preeminent jazz diva. By incorporating bop's note-heavy chords into her melodic lines she could imbue banal 32-bar songs with transcendent beauty. Her singing is ornate: She often mines the expressive possibilities of different vocal techniques, especially vibrato. Her inventiveness earned her a reputation as the era's most creative singer of popular songs. Tin Pan Alley was a jumping-off point for Vaughan's vocal artistry, not an end in itself.

In 1946 Vaughan began a solo career, recording bebop versions of standards like "Lover Man," accompanied by Parker and Gillespie. A year later Gillespie brought her over to the small Musicraft label, where she cut "Tenderly," her first national hit. The same year she married George Treadwell, a trumpeter who became her manager. Sophisticated and image-conscious, Treadwell spent \$8,000 on gowns, special music arrangements, and voice and elocution lessons for her. By 1950 her records were selling three million copies annually, and by 1952 she had earned almost \$1 million, excluding record royalties. Vaughan won Downbeat's award for best female singer annually from 1947-52, and Melanctone's award from 1948-53. "Broken-Hearted Melody," which sold a million copies in 1959, was her last commercially successful pop hit. In the last 30 years of her life Vaughan's reputation for vocal artistry grew steadily with her appearances at nightclubs, the Newport and JVC jazz festivals, and with symphony orchestras.

Gene Lees, an authority on American song of the '30s and '40s, introduces *The Columbia Years*

compilation by noting that "the entire body of popular music implicitly stated that romantic love was the only purpose in life." The songs gathered on that album prove his point; ballads like "You Taught Me To Love Again," "I'm Crazy To Love You," and "Goodnight My Love," give the theme away in the title. The love-struck authors of many songs on *The Columbia Years* are no less than Gershwin, Loesser, and Rodgers and Hammerstein.

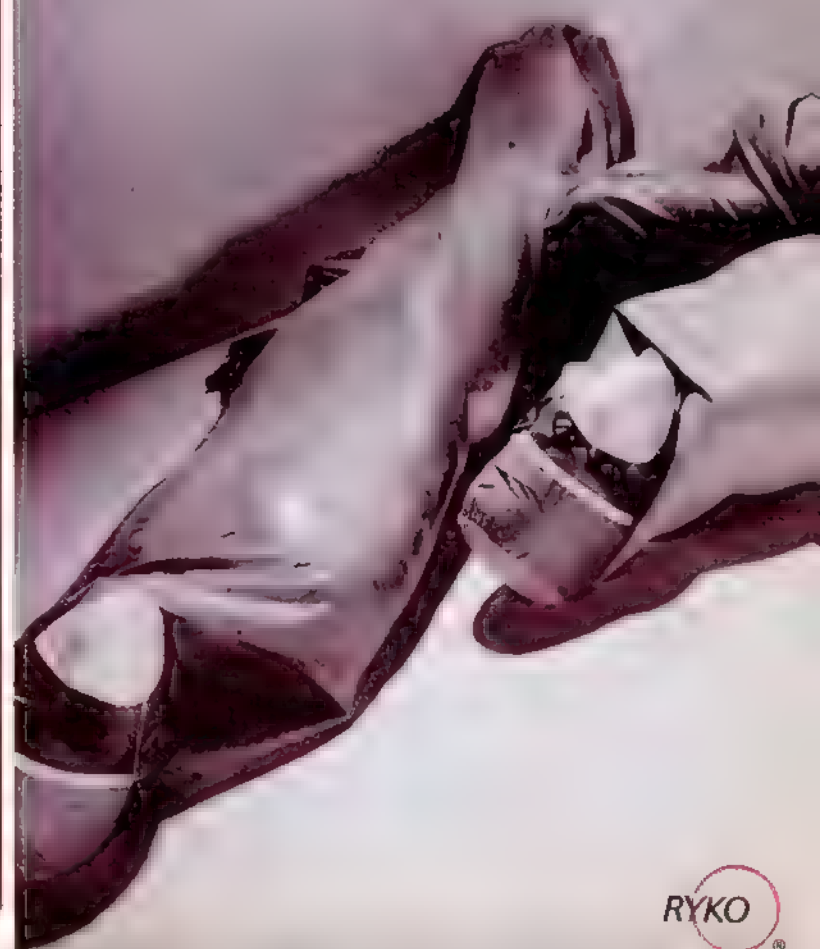
But many of the other songs Vaughan recorded during her five-year contract with Columbia were pop ephemera drenched in the strings of the house orchestra. The first nine songs of the collection, arranged and conducted by Joe Lipman in 1949, are characterized by emasculated studio accompaniment. The orchestra, sometimes numbering 20 pieces, sounds sluggish and monolithic; there is no soloing, no rhythmic counterpoint, and no call-and-response interplay between Vaughan and the musicians. The result is a static feeling, punctuated every three minutes by waves of stringed accompaniment that wash us in and out of each song.

The next eight songs are absolutely beautiful, the high point of the discs. Vaughan is in her element here, singing with a small group of jazz players, many from her Hines-Eckstine period. The songs from this 1950 session are much more vibrant and jazzy; Davis accompanies Vaughan on "It Might As Well Be Spring" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It." Her version of "Come Rain Or Come Shine," a Harold Arlen tune with lyrics by Johnny Mercer, is warm and chocolatey. Here Vaughan sings about everlasting devotion, how she will love and be loved in return. But Jimmy Jones's piano and Budd Johnson's tenor sax convey a wariness that makes her desire seem poignant.

"It sure is a nice feeling to know that people will remember you after you're gone—that you'll manage to be a little bit of history," she once told Leonard Feather, the jazz critic. Her voice lives on in the singing of Betty Carter, Cassandra Wilson, Anita Baker, Sade, and in all others who rejoice at the sound of great vocal instrumentality.

# HARD CORE DEVO VOL. 1 1974-77

**THE EVOLUTION OF DEVOLUTION**  
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# WORLD BEAT!

## African Head Shop

BY RICHARD GEHR

**T**alk about your diaspora. This month's heady clutch of awesome Africana comes courtesy of an Ethiopian residing in Washington, D.C., a Moroccan in Belgium, West African kora players recording with a trio of Mustaphas from mythical Szegerey, and a Berkeley-based palm-wine picker from Sierra Leone. Welcome to the global mall. Remember where you parked the moped.

My spine tingled within seconds of hearing the aforementioned Ethiopian songstress, Aster Aweke. On *Aster* (Columbia), she cuts loose with emotionally supercharged soul statements that could bring tears to grown men's eyes. Her voice trembles and breaks with a controlled hysteria and sometimes, as in the thrilling "Sebebu," cracks into a nasty little laugh. At a worldly gut level, Aweke is to, say, Ofra Haza, what pre-star-stunned Aretha Franklin once was to Barbra Streisand.

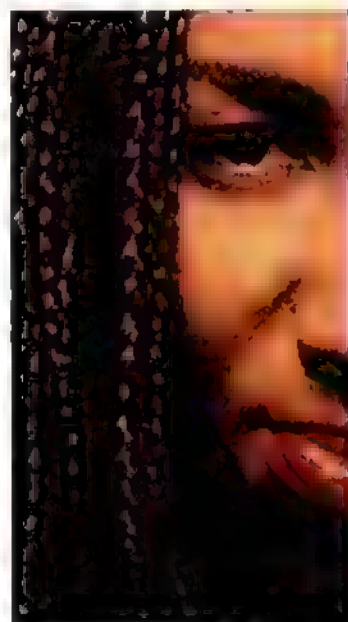
Aweke's obviously listened to lots of early Aretha, and probably Anita Baker, too. And like Billie Holiday, another influence, she stretches her limited vocal range to the limits with microtonal quavers. As with another great Ethiopian singer, Mahmoud Ahmed (whose brilliant *Ere Mela Mela* was recently re-released on CD by Hannibal), Aweke is backed by a horn-driven band so tightly wound you wouldn't know the rhythm tracks were recorded in Maryland while everything else was assembled in London.

Aweke easily overpowers those horns in over-the-edge love songs resembling Indian ghazals. Sample lyric from "Entitit!" ("Shivering"): *It doesn't suit me, this baptism of cold / Your warm body's gone and now I'm suffering . . . entitit!* She transforms the title word into a love boast so percussively passionate, you'll be shivering too.

I'd like to know how South Africa's homegrown reggae star Lucky Dube

came by his name. On *Prisoner* (Shonachie), he identifies so strongly with the world's racially victimized that it brings to mind Lee Perry's memorable bottom line about how "every black man, black woman, and black child down here is a captive—no true?" Dube sounds more like Peter Tosh—the most militant of the Wailers—than even Tosh's son Andrew does. Apart from a couple of sappy ballads slapped onto the disc by producer Richard Siluma, *Prisoner* contains first-rate protest music prodded forward by a terrific uncredited drummer and soul-system keyboards.

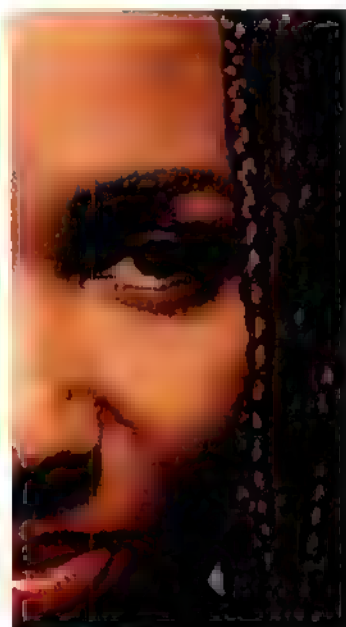
In a far more bucolic vein, nothing better complements backyard gin and tonics than *The Palm Wine Sounds of S.E. Rogie* (Workers Playtime import). Sooliman E. Rogie (a/k/a Rogers) is credited with dragging Sierra Leone's acoustic palm-wine



music (so named because it was played acoustically in bars) into the '60s by introducing electric instruments and livening up the music's gentle rural rhythms with the twist. Most of the tunes on *Palm Wine*, however, hark back to the '30s and '40s, a gentler era reflected in Rogie's gruff baritone. Songs such as "Lae Loe Lalah,"

which debates the relative merits of sex versus honey, manage an almost alien innocence. The subtle Caribbean-derived bottle-and-can rhythms have the same breezy night lilt as the slightly modernized Jamaican mento played by Port Antonio's Jolly Boys on *Pop'n'Mento* (Rykodisc).

Anyone who fell for the mid-'70s jazz-fusion vortex (or even house music, for that matter) knows how aural stimuli that might have elicited passionate responses years ago (or even last month, for that matter) can leave the older and wiser listener feeling ashamed, even canned, down the road. Big deal. I fully expect to someday regret my current infatuation with Demba Konte, Kausu Kuyateh, and the Jali Roll Orchestra's jumping *Jali Roll* (Rogue import), but transient sparks fly when the two kora players (from Gambia

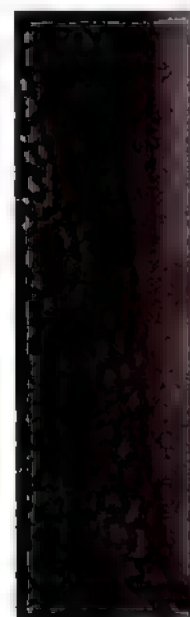


and Casamance, respectively) hook up with the 3 Mustaphas 3 for a jazzy confab of traditional griot morality songs spiked with punchy horns, accordion, and slide guitar. Authentications will sputter, of course, but the disc's reportedly a hit in the homeland, so what the hell.

The above sentiments apply in spades to the Arabic jazz fusion generated by Hassan Erraji & Arabesque on *Nikriz* (Riverboat import). A Moroccan musicologist

and fleet-fingered oud virtuoso, Erraji adapts music from Morocco and Turkey for his trio, which includes a snaking fretless bass player (Ralph Mizrak) and an equally flamboyant drummer (Pierre Narcisse). Celtic and Andalusian modes creep into this fluid melange, which hovers on a spiritual plane not all that far from the trio Oregon.

Fusion doesn't always have to be a dirty word. African dance music wouldn't jitter and glide nearly so complexly if it had never been "corrupted" by Western styles, instruments, and attitudes. For the most informative and entertaining (if not always crystal-clear) expedition through Africa's rich urban musical thickets to date, read Chris Stapleton and Chris May's *African Rock: The Pop Music of a Continent* (Dutton). And to get your mitts on the imported Africana mentioned above and below, try Stern's Music U.S.A., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Also:



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*Masters of Turkish Music* (Rounder)

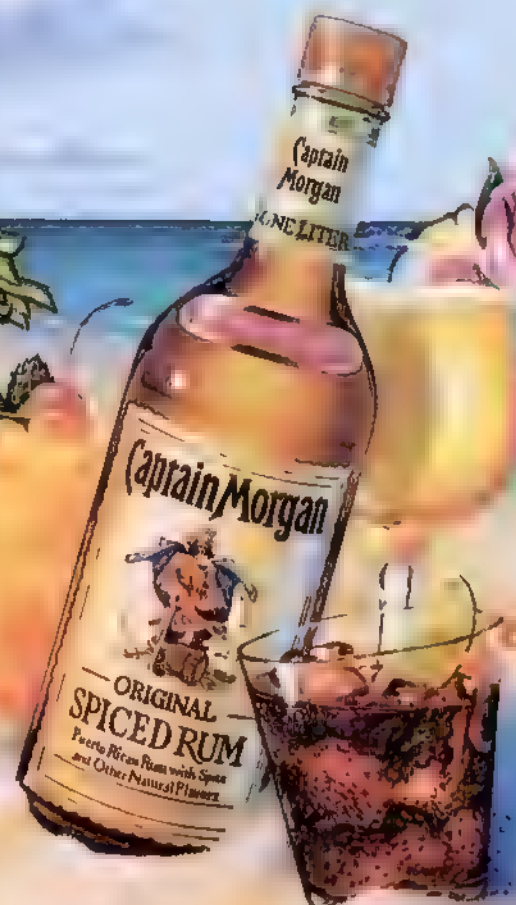


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## Rev. Al Sharpton

continued from page 40

have predicted 1990—that we'd be running around here with guys saying, "I don't see race. I don't see color. I just want to be an American. We're all God's children." And why these guys out there, like Arsenio, would get up and take shots at me and Farrakhan, and think, That's a joke, the white folks think it's funny. I would have never thought that we would open the door for people who want to compete for how much we can sell out our own, to entertain people.

**Let's talk about black leadership. First start locally here in New York. I have heard that there was some friction between you and [Rev. Herbert] Daughtry and some other people. Why can't we get it together? Talk about you and David Dinkins.**

Well, I think a lot of that friction is normal movement friction. There's always that friction in a movement. I mean, King and Wilkins didn't get along. A lot of that's normal, but I have to admit that at my trial, Rev. Calvin Butts and Rev. Mitchell and them came down and it really touched me. We disagreed on the Day of Outrage. He thought that we shouldn't do it and he publicly said it. But when the chips were down, Butts was there, and the press were always saying Butts was the anti-Sharpton guy. I think that circumstances brought us together. Sometimes I think that we need to maturely put aside our egos so that we can deal with each other realistically.

**Have you ever made a move to try and get everyone to sit around the table to iron out these problems?**

I think the problem is that you need an external force, not just a leadership sweepstakes, for lack of a better term, that would sit everybody down, with respect for everybody, to come up with a common agenda. Or come up with a project, and say, "Look, I don't care if y'all like each other or not, let's work on this." I think that's only a matter of time, before that happens, before an external force comes. It's a person or an event.

**David Dinkins—**

I've known David Dinkins 20 years, and David Dinkins and I are coming from two opposite roads of the black field. Dinkins is a politician who made it through the system, an ex-Marine, and I am the total antithesis of his life. Dave is a typical party politician and you've got to deal with him like that. I mean, he's a decent guy and it doesn't mean he's purposely trying to hurt anybody. And it doesn't mean he shouldn't be mayor—he's better than anybody who's running. I know my role, and my role is to be a real activist and I gotta keep the heat on. The hypocrites fight for everybody to stand there and tell Mandela to keep the pressure on, and then spend the rest of their time telling me to keep the pressure. I mean, the same thing that makes Mandela great is going to make this movement here great.

**Did you go to any of the Mandela events?**

Yeah, quietly. I went to one.

**How much of an impact do you think he had, especially here in New York? I went to a lot of the stuff, I never saw black people unified like during those three days that Mandela was here.**

I think Mandela brought a spirit, a unity, and courage, that I haven't seen since the '60s. And even then there wasn't that much unity, because everybody had their



"What 15-year-old kid wants to be called a hoax all over the world?" The Rev. Al Sharpton marches with Tawana, to his right.

own ideas. It was a beautiful thing, because everybody—I mean from yuppies to street gangs—was proud of this man. This man unquestionably made some great sacrifices and everybody respected that, and to see him honored in this country, which he deserved, was really enough to make you cry. I mean, it was really a very emotional thing for me. I think it was hypocritical for a lot of guys like Governor Cuomo to be standing up there with him, but even that didn't take away the beauty of it for me, because it said to me that even they've got to bow to the truth. I think Mandela is everything that black people really appreciate and respect. And I think that it did a lot for the movement, because the more people see of Mandela the more people will understand people in this country who are fighting in their own way. If we could just bring it home that we got our brothers in South Africa, then the whole ball game would be over.

**What were the charges against you [When a grand jury indicted you last June]?**

They said that I had taken 250,000 dollars from National Youth Movement between 1985 and 1988, and it was proven in court we had only raised 180,000 dollars at that time, which would have meant I had stolen every dime and 70,000 dollars. It was the most ludicrous case in the world, but still with the twelve people in the box you don't know. They're reading that you're crazy and you're a radical and you're dividing the city. You don't know where they're gonna come from.

**Were you surprised?**

I was very surprised, because I don't believe in the grand jury system. I don't believe the trial was fair, and I believe the law of averages would have said that at least two or three counts of that would fall their way. Maddox is probably the best legal mind in the world. He did an excellent job. It was ironic that Marcos and I got acquitted on the same day and I got put on the same stand. Really the statement that the juries were sending was, "Despite our differences in politics, there's no place for political trials in this country—you want to argue in a political arena, not the courtroom." I think that was a clear message, because they

brought people in from Hawaii, St. Louis, California—about 14 states brought people in to testify.

**Against you?**

Yeah. I mean, these companies came in to say, "We gave money and we don't know what happened to the money," but they threw them in. It was like an unlimited budget. And even the media, who you notice downplayed the trial, were saying, "It doesn't make sense. Nobody's saying he stole any money. Where are they getting this from?" And I live in Brooklyn, on St. Mark's Avenue. I've got a walk-up apartment, I've got no car, no decent car I could make money, but that ain't what I choose to do. Everybody who knows me knows that ain't my game. I got balls. I'm not sayin' I'm a saint, but that ain't what I'm about.

**Why did you go to jail?**

While I was charged with disorderly conduct, I went to jail for leading a non-violent march in February 1988 called "A Day of Outrage" at the airport, where it was important for the visitors who come in and out of New York to be aware of and see that racism had reached outrageous proportions in New York. Yet while I had beat a 67-count indictment, I was put in jail for 15 days for leading a nonviolent march. No one has ever served time for leading a legitimate nonviolent march, particularly one that happened two years ago. Had they listened to me two years ago Yusef Hawkins might not have been killed.

**So let's talk about your organization.**

The civil rights vehicle that I did at Howard Beach, we fought Bernard Goetz before Howard Beach, we got a '77 police investigation and busted the cops—all that was Youth Movement. Then in '88, after Howard Beach, we got into Brawley. Alton said to me, "You ain't no youth no more. You need to form something different." That's when we formed the United African Movement, Vernon and I. That's when we started having the rallies. We draw probably bigger rallies than anyone else in the country on a weekly basis, and we've got anyone from college presidents to housewives, 30 different divisions at UAM.

**What do you think about the boycott in Brooklyn of the Korean market?**

I think they were absolutely correct. First of all, there were a number of assaults on black people, I think that is correct. I think the concentration should be for us to build our own stores. Here's what I think —

**With all that energy, why can't black people start their own mother-fuckin' vegetable stand? That's the key.**

Well, here again comes the need for collective leadership. 'Cause if we sit down, the thing is — let's say Melba Moore does a show for us. You can take one concert and have your seed money to start a permanent store and some guy doesn't go for it, you have to go for it. And then it becomes a pro-black thing. At the same time, if black people want to keep boycotting, let them do that but have some energy also to build. I think for that collective leadership is necessary. But even though there are some of my members in the boycott, I absolutely agree that the store ought to be boycotted, even now

**How many months does it take?**

Well, seven months.

**But you can't do both.**

No, but my point is, if the guy beat up a woman there, nobody should ever shop there. I don't care if there's nothing to eat, the guy should be out of business. I think the people in the streets would have raised the money to open a store

**You could have passed around a hat and they would have done that.**

They would have done that right there. I mean you've got two or three people walking in front of a store picketing. You're gonna end up with no new store and their guy would outwait them because he's got support from all the Asian community.

**How were the Koreans able to own every fruit and vegetable stand in New York City?**

Because they came here with the psychology to do it. What white people will not admit or deal with is that black people were psychologically destroyed, in the way we were not taught to think how to build businesses and own and operate anything. Koreans who we fought for and died for in Korea — black soldiers come here with a self concept and a culture and family attachments and money. They were not taught to hate themselves and their cousins like we were, so they could put money together and get a storefront and build. White people say, "Why don't black people do that?" Because you taught us not to. Now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't overcome it, that's no excuse, but my first answer to the white people is, "We're doing exactly

continued on page 82

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## Rev. Al Sharpton

continued from page 91

what you taught us to do: nothing."

**You have to remember that during segregation there were plenty of black businesses but integration came and we were so happy to spend money with white folks downtown we stopped patronizing our own.**

That's self-hatred. You have the option of going the other way, and you go the other way because you hate yourself. But again, that should not be used as an excuse. It should be used as a commentary so that black people will see the stupidity of it. We cannot blame the Koreans—Spike—or the Jews, or the Arabs, for taking advantage. If a guy walks in and says, here's a million-dollar community to market, and we let him do it, that's not his fault, that's our fault. I'm explaining why it happens. The same rule in my opinion, which has gotten me in trouble, is not only at the ma and pa corner store, it is also in the record industry, and the film industry. I think the biggest slaves in the world are entertainers. I do not understand why blacks go on the road for white promoters, go spend their money in the white community, when it was black people who supported them, nurtured them from the get go. Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie,

Tina Turner, Whitney Houston. I said, "What are you doing? Talking about you gonna go out and tour when black people aren't going to make any money." In the Jacksons tour, I told them, I said, "Let me ask you a question. If Frank Sinatra were on tour and said only white people would make money from it, y'all wouldn't picket him, you'd break his legs. So don't look at me like I'm some monster from another planet." The way they played that in the press was that I was an extortionist. What we did was make Michael form a community relations team who looked at people around the country, brought black promoters in. Lionel Richie hired black promoters, Tina did, and Whitney did. But they owed it to the black community. White people never heard of Michael Jackson until "Billie Jean." We fed this little Negro from Gary, Indiana, with "ABC." Now all of a sudden, everybody's gonna collect but us? And he says, "Don King's supposed to be a bad guy." Bad guy? You got the mafia running your tour. I mean, these guys—Hollywood, the record industry—black people got to control their own, black people got talent. Even whites love black talent. If we just control our talent, it would be like coffee is to the Brazilians. But the problem is, you got one Don King in sports, you got one Spike Lee in film, and the rest of these Negroes are illiterate, backward bastards off of some longshoreman's union.

And it's the little dimes and nickels in our community that makes these guys stars. From Arsenio to Bobby Brown, none of them would be a star if kids wouldn't have invested in their careers. And the question is, How come black kids can't grow up to be promoters and advertisers and lawyers and accountants?

**I think for the most part, not to keep myself out of this, but I think black people in general have let black entertainers get away with too much. We can let black artists make music videos with white women in every single video, no sisters, and nobody says nothing. We still buy their records even though they play in South Africa. "It's alright, I still like the record." We just let the artists get away with murder.**

Let me tell you something. The fact that black people are not going to be allowed to come to New York and sing and dance for white people, somebody's gotta do something or we're gonna be singing a duet, I'm gonna be onstage singing. The insult to me is that James Brown was in jail for a year and a half and not one black entertainer went to see him. Shows you the consciousness of black entertainment. Michael Jackson, Prince, all these guys stole from James. They can run after any white kid that's got a disease that they never heard of, and

they can cry holdin' him in their arms bringing him to the graveyard, but the man that they stole his music to learn how to perform, they can't identify with him. This is a sickness. They'll go to the Graceland gates to cry over Elvis, who died a junkie, before they'll go see James Brown.

### Let's talk about Barry.

Hey, man. Here's a man—mayor of a city, the nation's capitol—he's a junkie. Whether you or I think he should be hanged or not is not particularly relevant—that's out and already decided. What I'm dealing with here is the double standard. Just like you heard about Mayor Koch. Nobody put no film in his bedroom. We've videotaped a lot of mayors. Why don't we video Ed? I mean, Ed Koch had 300 people go to jail during his administration. We didn't see what he was doing in his bedroom, which would have probably been a bit more interesting to the SPIN readers than Marion Barry.

### How much do you think Koch is responsible for the racial climate in all these tours of City Park?

I think he's largely responsible because I think Koch openly played to the white, middle-class, blue-collar mentality because that's what made him mayor. And I think that ended up putting the city in a barricade-type of situation. I think it was reinforced by a Reagan administration,



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### HEAVY ROTATION

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 The Strawberry Zots | Cars, Flowers, Telephones |
| 2 Yo La Tengo         | Fakebook                  |
| 3 The Boredoms        | Soul Discharge            |
| 4 Living Color        | Time's Up                 |
| 5 Black Box           | Dreamland                 |
| 6 The Afros           | Kickin' Afrolicious       |

### COLLEGE RADIO TOP TWENTY

- |                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Sonic Youth         | Goat                            |
| 2 Breeders            | Pod                             |
| 3 Adrian Belew        | Young Lions                     |
| 4 Sundays             | Reading, Writing And Arithmetic |
| 5 Jesus Jones         | Liquidizer                      |
| 6 24-7 Spyz           | Gumbo                           |
| 7 Ultra Vivid Scene   | Millennium                      |
| 8 World Party         | Joy 1967-1990                   |
| 9 Concrete Blonde     | Goodbye Jumbo                   |
| 10 Mazzy Star         | Bloodletting                    |
| 11 Strawberry Zots    | She Hangs Brightly              |
| 12 Hothouse Flowers   | Cars, Flowers, Telephones       |
| 13 Primus             | Home                            |
| 14 Revenge            | Frizzle Fry                     |
| 15 Revolting Cocks    | One True Passion                |
| 16 Wire               | Beers, Steers & Quers           |
| 17 Lightning Seeds    | Manicaps                        |
| 18 David J            | Cloudbuckooland                 |
| 19 Lou Reed/John Cale | Songs From Another Season       |
| 20 Depeche Mode       | Songs For Drilla Violator       |

### SPINS

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Dese-Lite               | World Clique                   |
| 2 Boogie Down Productions | Edutainment                    |
| 3 Living Color            | Time's Up                      |
| 4 Various Artists         | Blues In The Mississippi Night |
| 5 The Time                | Pandemonium                    |
| 6 Joan Armatrading        | Hearts and Flowers             |
| 7 Lee "Scratch" Perry     | From The Secret Laboratory     |
| 8 Shinehead               | The Real Rock                  |
| 9 24-7 Spyz               | Gumbo                          |
| 10 The Winans             | Millennium                     |
| 11 The Neville Brothers   | Return                         |
| 12 Eric B. & Rakim        | Brothers Keepers               |
|                           | Let The Rhythm Hit 'Em         |

### SPIN INDIES

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Duck and Cover        | Various Artists |
| 2 Whamox Express        | No Man          |
| 3 Feather on the Wind   | Mark Shepard    |
| 4 Answer                | The Squares     |
| 5 This Is a Journey     | Side F X        |
| 6 Recollection 84-89    | Attrition       |
| 7 Is This Love          | Albert Hagar    |
| 8 Nocturnal Habit       | The Neptunes    |
| 9 Media Whores Must Die | Borrowed Men    |
| 10 Alloy Saves          | All             |
| 11 Chemical People      | The Right Thing |
| 12 I Got Game           | Sir Mix A Lot   |
| 13 The Orbitrons        | Various         |

**"There was actually a wedding going on where they broke up the wedding, and the bride, groom, and the whole bridal party came to the street and started screaming 'nigger.' These were people in love, making their vows, and they stopped their vows to God to go—It was amazing."**

into a Bush administration, whose whole thing was, "Let's turn back the clock. Let's take the Supreme Court, and let's take back some of these rights." I don't think that Cuomo and them did anything to stop it either, though. I don't think that Cuomo was leading the parade like Koch, but he was certainly on the front row. So I think that your problem is that America has decided that it's sick of niggers. We've done enough for you all—no more affirmative action, no more quotas.

**You've got Eddie Murphy. You've got Bill Cosby.**

You got Arsenio Hall. We give niggers two million dollars to play basketball. So what you've got are homeless, so what you've got are drug addicts, so what you've got is AIDS. "We have done enough for you guys." And I think that there is the problem. It has been a selective few that benefited and the masses went backwards rather than progressed. And that's the problem—the mass movement. And the few that made it don't understand they made it because the masses forfeited. Vanessa Williams wasn't the first pretty black woman in America; it's that a movement opened the door for her. Michael Jackson. The difference between Michael Jackson and James Brown is the white movement. James Brown was out there but the white people weren't looking at black artists in his day. Michael was the result of a movement. Who opened the doors for America to see Michael? It was the Martin Luther Kings and the Fannie Lou Hamers. And that was what I was trying to tell Michael during his whole tour, is that, "Yeah, you are a crossover artist but who crossed you over? Malcolm crossed you over, Martin crossed you over." And that's what the Arsenios and the Eddie Murphys and them have got to understand.

**You don't think Eddie understands that?**

I think Eddie understands, but I don't think Arsenio understands. And I think that once you understand, then where is your debt to that type of movement to continue that? Because the minute you think that some slick Hollywood agent is the reason that you can talk to all of America and not that the reason is that people lay down and die, literally die—people who want to go home and see

their kids at night like you want to, who want to eat behind the table like you want to. So your little ungrateful black ass became a millionaire. I mean, it's amazing to me. It really makes me really angry.

**Black athletes have a guilty attitude?**

Hey, I'm talking about athletes. I'm talking about entertainers. I'm talking about people in the film world. They really act like, you know, the whole world is just acting like that and that they are really that talented. But America wasn't ready for them yet, because we had to open America up. So I've got friends dead—I'm talking about dead, man—that I had grown up with in the movement. Died for Arsenio to get up on TV and then tell jokes about us. I mean, come on, this ain't real. And you don't see Jewish comedians doing that—telling all the people that fought the Holocaust—they take that seriously. But, it's a joke to us. We get killed out here—this is real. You got white people in some sections of this country who would love to kill me—this is real. No ifs, ands, or buts.

**They'll take money for it, baby.**

Yeah. Dead. I ain't talking about wounded. I'm talking about killed. And for what? For a guy to take a potshot at you? Hey, you better understand the reality of it, but you've got to keep on going. Mandela—27 years—couldn't come home, couldn't deal with his kids. For 16 years, couldn't see his wife. This man gave his whole life, man. And how do you equate that with someone who can tell one or two lines on a talk show? It's deeper than that, man. It's deeper than that. And in the long run, they end up minimizing their own integrity. Because a Mandela, in a hundred years from now, means something. And five years from now, we won't even remember these guys were on television.

**They'll be on Hollywood Squares.**

That's right. If they buy the lifestyle. You gotta pay for the lifestyle.

**Let's talk about the influence of crack in the black community and what it's done to our youth.**

I think it's destroyed a whole generation. I think it was a methodical plan by somebody by the way it cut off what was going on in the community, and you put

them to sleep. How do you put them to sleep? Drugs. And one drug led to another drug. Then you needed a cheap drug—which became crack—to make sure that you could get the maximum distribution throughout the community so everybody could get it.

It has really stifled a whole generation. And that's why I think people like you have become important because the only sparks in our generation of some positive and continuous struggle came from people like you. You see, when I grew up you had everybody. You had King. You know, I'm 35 now but when I was 16, you had King, you had Powell, you had the Muslims, Lionel Hampton. But now, who have these kids got? A lady told me the other day coming out of court, "I don't like some of the things you say. Sometimes you get too loud. I don't like your hairstyle. But you are the only Powell or Malcolm or King that my kids are going to see—live. I got to protect you because I got no option. You are the only Ossie Davis or Portier—or what ever all that Robeson put together is—for my daughters of two and three. Because Robeson to them is going to be like somebody in the 1800s was to me. I don't know how much I teach it to them, it was a hundred years ago, daddy." But *Do The Right Thing* is now. So do I say, "Spike, I disagree with one scene," or do I try to protect Spike because that is the only attachment to reality my kids are going to

know? And that's what I think we've got to start dealing with: that our kids are starting to make a model of King rather than Booker T. That's like a generation past. Whoever is out here now is all that our kids are going to know. They're going to judge the movement based on what they see. They're not going to go to the library to start digging up people from 50 years ago because we didn't.

**But we've got to learn that history, don't we?**

We need to learn the history, but in order to learn it and teach it you've got to get people's attention. And the only way you can get people's attention is through the people here now. Books don't fall off the shelves and hit you in the head; somebody's got to make you want to pick them up. And that's why I think you've got to do the multiplicity role. Yeah, we need Jesse. Jesse is a brilliant guy. We disagree on some things, but Jesse has changed the face of America. You need guys like Dinkins, you need guys on the inside, you need guys like me on the outside, and everybody's got to respect each other's roles. But as long as everybody says, "You've got to do it my way," that ain't gonna work, 'cause there ain't no one way to do it, you need everybody in their role doing whatever it is they do and doing their best. Otherwise people are just totally counterproductive, they gotta go. By any means necessary. ☼



In 1989, Bob Mould released **WORKBOOK**, his first solo effort. "Classic," said *New Music Express*, "would be too demeaning a term." "Quite Magnificent," said *Q*. *Rolling Stone* wrote, "the road to success and maturity can indeed be treacherous, but **WORKBOOK** proves that every once in a while it's worth it." "Proves there's life after thrash rock," opined *GQ*. While *Musician* wondered: "Is it too early to ask for more?" Here it is.

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## Living Colour

continued from page 50

black people is, "You guys are so talented, why are you wasting it on rock? You guys could be doing jazz. Why this?" On one level, I think they're confused about what an artist is supposed to be. The bottom line as an artist is you gotta do what you wanna do. Then, we hear comments like, "Why do you wanna be white. Why do you want to play white music?" This is totally outrageous. First of all, I dare any white band to get up and sing some of the lyrics we sing. Second, a comment like that shows ignorance that rock is a black-originated art form. We're just carrying on the tradition in our own way.

**Calhoun.** Sometimes black people view black life just as one-dimensionally as white people do. When we did those early interviews we'd get comments from the press like, "They're really intelligent!" Are we not supposed to be? Like what do you want to hear? We're all ghetto kids and Jagger got off the train one day and saw us playing on 42nd Street. He bought us all new instruments, took us out to England, and we shedded in his basement, came up with some tunes, and decided to put a band together. People ask us, "Why are you playing rock'n'roll?" I never read an article on George Michael asking him why he was singing R&B. A lot of press we get is "Black Rock"; "Black Band Brings Down Barriers." Why can't we just be a rock band? Why can't we just be Living Colour? Or then there are the people who are fascinated with Corey's hair. They say, "Wow! Can I touch it?" Hey, deal with the music! We've got a concept here, and we're very serious about it. We're not artifacts.

**Glover.** When we were recording *Time's Up*, we came out of the studio one day and ran into this guy who says, "Wow. You're from the band Living Colour, right? Man, I love what you're doing. You're getting by doing their shit." No, we gettin' by doing our own.

**Calhoun.** I think the only thing that makes the fact that we play rock a big deal is that there aren't many black bands out there that are doing it and making it. There are definitely a lot of black bands doing it, 'cause we've toured all over the U.S. and Europe and run into plenty.

**Skillsings.** Tons.

**Glover.** Harvey from San Francisco. Follow For Now from Atlanta. First Light from Cleveland. The Veldt from North Carolina. Tuff Nuts from St. Louis. They got in touch with us because they did Living Colour covers. Lots of bands from Florida, Boston, some in Texas. We ran into a band in England called Him.

**Calhoun.** Everywhere we went there were musicians who wanted to know about the BRC [Black Rock Coalition]. They wanted to pick our brains.

**Skillsings.** We'd always hear the same thing, "Man, we've been doing this for years and we haven't made it; record companies don't take us seriously." Seeing us gave them encouragement.

**Rumor has it that Epic plans to market you exclusively to the white mainstream.**

**Calhoun.** That's a rumor. As a matter of fact, there are some plans for some more black support with this record. I don't think there's any way that we could play only to a white audience because what we're talking about doesn't just relate to white people. Our experience is a black experience. I don't see us being just marketed into one hole.

**Skillsings.** In terms of the marketing, Epic is taking certain steps to service the record to black radio. They'll have it in their hands; what black radio decides to do with it is up to them.

[Reid comes in.]

**Reid.** Hey, what's up everybody? Sorry I'm late. Muzzy, Muzzy, hello, man.

**Skillsings:** What's up man?

**Reid:** I haven't seen you in a long time.

**Cory:** Senator, how are you doing? [Everyone laughs.]

**Let's talk about the album.**

**Reid.** I've always wanted us to be a band that could get across many types of music and still hold together as one thing. We don't play genre metal. We don't play genre rock'n'roll. And I think we were able to really prove that on this album. On each song we mix genres and styles of music. A band I've always admired was Was(Not Was). They would do records and have Mel Torme or Ozzy Osbourne come in—

**Glover:** Or Frank Sinatra, Jr.

**Reid.** Or Frank Sinatra, Jr. And these folks would do cameos on their records, but Was Not Was still maintained its own strong identity. We were able to do that a little bit on the first record, but we got deeper into it this time around. Like having Latifah come in for "Under Cover of Darkness." It's not a Rent a Rapper thing, she does an integral bit on the song, and the lyrics are her own. Or just the kick of having Little Richard appear on "Elvis is Dead." It's heavy, just to hear him go "Woo" on our record. I was sitting there thinking, Damn, Little Richard is on our record! And Maceo Parker! And Doug E. Fresh and the Black Swan String Quartet. We also had Don Byron on "Under Cover of Darkness." He's up and coming on the new jazz scene and we still have ties to all of that.

**Skillsings.** And D.K. Dyson [Eye and I] and Derin Young [Science and Ritual] sang backup.

**Reid.** And Alva Rogers sang the line "Elvis is Dead" in German.

**Calhoun.** I like "Time's Up" and "This is the Life," but I'll talk about "Pride" because I wrote it and it's about something I've experienced all my life. See, I went to college in Boston. I was thrown out of history class for saying that Hannibal was a black man. My teacher thought that it was totally irrelevant. There's this impression that our history begins when the slave ships came in.

**Tell me about "This is the Life."**

**Reid.** I was thinking of Indian classical music when I first came up with the song. It turned out to be an interpolation of a few types of music. We put together a tamboura drone for the introduction. From there we added different elements. I played something that sounds like the guitar is being played backwards. Each person brought their own thing. I like what Muzzy adds to it. It's almost like bells and gongs are coming from the bass. It reminds me of the early electronic music. When they had those huge Moog oscillators and ring modulators. It's almost psychedelic in a way.

**It seems like all of the songs on *Time's Up* have preambles.**

**Reid.** I love the introduction to "Love Rears Its Ugly Head Again." It's a sample of Nat "King" Cole's version of "Lush Life." It's got this beautiful violin introduction, it just screams romance. The song itself goes on to undercut that. When you hear the intro, you can almost see Will and Muzz in a field running towards each other.

**Calhoun.** Only to be mowed down by an Uzi.

**Who is speaking on "History Lesson"?**

**Reid.** That's James Earl Jones, Ruby Dee, and Ossie Davis. It's from a black history record done in the late '60s.

**The "black experience" is not a uniform genetic code, and artists such as Living Colour are waging a battle over images: They are living, breathing testaments to the fact that black Americans don't fit into neat racial packages.**

**How did the music for "Elvis is Dead" come to be?**

**Reid.** "Elvis is Dead" was almost like a lurge at first. I played the original music for Muzz, and he agreed that it just didn't fit with the words. The morning we went in to rehearse the song, it came to me to take it in a different direction, to make it a little more R&B, make it a little more funky. Kind of a James Brown-style with a rock base to it. Instead of a guitar solo, I came up with the idea of laying down a saxophone solo, so we called up Maceo. He came in, put down about three solos, and was out of the studio in a half hour. We used the first solo he did. The finishing touch was getting Little Richard to do his own little commentary. He actually knew Elvis.

**Why didn't you call the album *Elvis is Dead*?**

**Glover.** We thought about it along with eight million other titles.

**Skillsings.** It didn't represent the whole record.

**Are there places you wouldn't play that song?**

**Glover.** Hell no.

**Reid.** Elvis came to me and told me to write the lyrics.

**Glover.** He came to him in his sleep.

**Reid.** Like Chuck said, Elvis is a hero to most, but actually, he lived a very sad life. Toward the end, he was living like a trapped animal. Elvis was great at the beginning—he did some great records—but the crown thing is something else. If he's the King of rock'n'roll, who is Fats Domino? The court jester?

**What's going to happen to you guys in the '90s?**

**Will you get too hip for rock? Do you think you can continue to merge all the different kinds of music that you're interested in and still sell in Peoria?**

**Reid.** To me, someone like Peter Gabriel transcends. He's just transcendent of everything around him, of the business, of the categories of music. He's someone I look up to. I've always wanted to transcend genres. Rock became a methodology somewhere along the way. The same thing with hip hop. When PE came out, it was almost like the beginning of a punk movement in hip hop. But now it's a methodology—thus is how you make records, thus is how you look in the videos—and it's such a young music to experience such a phenomenon. But we're [living] in media-saturated times. Things are disseminated instantly—it's weird. As for Living Colour, it's important that we're a rock'n'roll band, but it's also important that we're not stuck in those genre considerations. Look at us in metal magazines—there's Tesla, there's Metallica, and there's Living Colour. And it's not just that we're black: It's our vibe, our whole thing is so different. If we can keep that spark, we'll be relevant—not relevant—I should say the music will still mean something to us. ☺

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ON NEWSSTANDS: OCTOBER 16

## Marion Barry

continued from page 56

a personal friend, Karen Johnson, in 1981-82. He denied it. Johnson chose to go to jail for contempt of court rather than testify before the grand jury herself. At Barry's trial in 1990, one witness testified that she had used drugs with Barry many times in 1983.

All along Barry knew he was being closely watched. In 1984, he told *Ebony* magazine that his phone was tapped. But, perhaps emboldened by his increasingly secure grip on City Hall, he continued using drugs. By 1986, he was using cocaine regularly with Rasheeda Moore, one of his many lady friends. By 1987, he was smoking crack with her. According to one witness, Barry liked to sprinkle crack in his marijuana joints; he called the result an "M.B. special." By 1988, the mayor was asking another girlfriend to deliver crack to his office in the Municipal Building.

Marion Barry might have started out as the boy from Hardtime, Mississippi, but by his reelection in 1986, he resembled more the hustler whose voice is heard at the end of "Living for the City," pressing others to take legal risks for him. "Hey, hey, brother, hey come here slick, you look hip man, you wanna make five bucks man, look here, run this across the street for me, right quick."

Abel Holtz's "mistake"—making big money off the drug business—was soon forgotten. In 1986, he was profiled in the *Washington Post*, described as a mysterious fellow about whom little was known. The fact that Holtz had also accepted \$242 million from the Colombian money changer in Miami in 1980-81 in drug-tainted deposits wasn't mentioned until the 40th paragraph of the story.

Capital Bank, in fact, had been under federal investigation for alleged money-laundering practices for nearly ten years. Holtz insists that neither he nor any bank employees violated the law. In 1987, federal prosecutors, after long internal debate, decided not to indict Holtz or Capital Bank. One top federal law enforcement official who worked on the Capital Bank probe said that the prosecutors felt they could not proceed against Holtz without an absolutely airtight case. "If you lose one of those, you lose all your credibility," the official says. The evidence against Holtz and the bank, the official said, wasn't quite strong enough. The investigation was closed.

Kathleen Day, the *Post* reporter who wrote the story, says she buried the story of Holtz's one-time participation in the drug economy because it took place years earlier, and it wasn't a "smoking gun."

By 1989, national drug policy-makers had settled on Washington, D.C., as the symbol of the nation's drug problem. William Bennett, the "czar" appointed by Bush to fight the war on drugs, announced that the District of Columbia, not Miami, would be the "test case" for his theories on fighting drugs. In September 1989, Bush said the city's drug problem was so bad you could buy crack cocaine across the street from the White House. He held up a bag of crack on national TV to prove his point.

It was true that D.C. had become the country's homicide capital, with up to 60 percent of the murders related in some way to illicit drugs. But Miami remained the undisputed financial, logistical, and cultural center of the North American drug trade.

The Miami political class had an even more indulgent attitude. City fathers named a downtown thoroughfare after Abel Holtz. The Dade County Commissioners named a street after Leonel Martinez, a prominent local builder and resident of Cocoplum, who was soon convicted for running a huge drug-smuggling operation. The namesake of Leo-Mar Avenue was a contributor to the Republican party. In fact, before he was caught, the cocaine kingpin had proudly displayed a Christmas card from George and Barbara Bush.

Washington's drug dealers, on whom Bush and Bennett preferred to focus national attention, were far less financially successful than their counterparts in Miami. In 1987, more than 24,000 District residents sold drugs, according to a recent study by the RAND Corporation. About half of them were classified as regular dealers. Their annual income was estimated to be about \$24,000 a year tax free. None of them lived in a neighborhood as opulent as Cocoplum. None was a prominent socialite. None had a street named after them. Few, if any, received holiday cheer from the Bushes. Their total net earnings were estimated to be \$350 million. At most, D.C.'s drug market was one-tenth the size of Miami's.

For Bush and Bennett to speak frankly about Miami would have called attention to the impotence of federal drug policy in Miami. It would also have called attention to people like Leonel Martinez and Abel Holtz. It would also have required taking on the "no questions asked" culture of Miami's business and political elite—an elite dominated by Cuban-Americans, the most loyal Republican voting bloc in the country.

The chaotic, violent drug market of D.C. was a more attractive target. For George Bush and Bill Bennett it made much more political sense to let the media air soundbites of them holding black crack babies in their arms than to stroll the streets of Cocoplum, pointing out the mansions of Cuban-American drug smugglers for the TV audience. The fact

continued on page 99



## Eddie Murphy

continued from page 36

politics. But ultimately, I think we have the same views on things, we just have to approach it differently.

**Like that picture over there of Malcolm [and Martin].**

I think we agree on most things; I just have to have a different approach because—I'll give an example. My house is bugged, my phones were tapped, my bedroom was bugged and all kinds of shit. And that goes with Jesse Jackson coming to my house—relatives and Minister Farrakhan coming to my house. When Minister Farrakhan comes to town, I have the FBI watching my house to see who goes in and out of my house and shut. And the reason my house is bugged is because I got these political—these black leaders that come and they talk to me. Now, what the government does is, they do Gallup polls: Who is the most popular black amongst the youth?—and it'd be Eddie Murphy, Michael Jordan, and Bill Cosby. And it's like, "Okay, you got three niggers and the Pope coming together before the President," and all that shit and they look and they say, "Well, who is dangerous? Now, Michael Jordan is an athlete and he is in the United States, Bill Cosby does lots of stuff for black people, but it's a different type of black person than when you can remember getting a foot in your ass or getting sprayed down with a water hose. He's a different type of black person than the black person who saw it on television." If you were there, you'd be afraid of it, and if you saw it on television, it'd make you angry.

It makes you angry when you see it. They say, "Okay, if this person wants to decide to become a crazy radical political person, going against the grain, he's potentially dangerous," because my films go all over the world and I am a comedian. So it's like, doing comedy I can get a message across being funny, and, on top of it, everybody's going to go see my shit. That's why I have to be different, that's why I type through my shit. Ultimately, I could get dissed. I don't think you can beat the system. I think the thing you have to do is be successful within the system. And to get our just due.

**Well, that's something I learned, but like you say, people have to arrive at their own pace and the way they want to approach things. That was a great moment, when Mandela went straight up to you and told you that. He must be smuggling those tapes in the prison, huh? And Dinkins gave you a fucked up introduction, huh?**

Well, what Dinkins was doing was being a politician. It's like, I'm perceived by a lot of people as being a misogynist and homophobic and being all these things, and in the meantime he's the Mayor of New York, when all these things are on the front page right now, so in introducing me and being a politician and making apologies for something that didn't warrant being apologetic about. I tripped on the fact that I connected with Mandela, you know?

**You said, good-naturedly, "What kind of introduction is this?"**

"Well, you can't go by what you see." I'm really gonna come off bad in this thing.

**No, you're not, this is great. Let's talk about your short-lived directing career—*Harlem Nights*. Why'd you want to direct?**

I had just been procrastinating doing it for like, three, four years. A lot of it came out of frustration, because

what's happened with me is to find really good directors that want to work with me. It's really hard. Usually I get a schlep director with maybe one or two hit pictures, but that's not really an artist. I've had directors I like—I like a lot of directors I worked with—but I think I've had maybe two artists, and the rest of the guys were like, "I'll do this Eddie Murphy movie and get paid" and shit. So rather than getting the schlep—first of all, I've wanted to do something with Richard Pryor for years—rather than getting a schlep—

**"In retrospect, I think doing something like the last two films I've done, maybe it's good that it makes you lose a step. Because what it does now is it makes you human again and the pressure is off you."**

per, I said, "Well, fuck it, I'll just do the shit myself." And the biggest problem that I ran into is the biggest problem I have as an entertainer period, is that you get to a certain level—we had this discussion the other day—where people will not say, "Yo, man, that's fucked up, don't do that." So what I did was I said, "I'm gonna get Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor and Redd Foxx in a movie that's really not a comedy." It was the first time I had written an all-out screenplay. There were just too many different hats to be wearing the same time for the first time. It wasn't a pleasurable experience. I just wanted to direct—just to see if I can do it. And I found out that I can't, and I won't do it anymore. And the biggest thing is I didn't enjoy doing it. The problem with *Harlem Nights* wasn't the directing as much as it was the writing of it. It was just written fucked up, and that's because I threw it together real quick. And then it was disappointing because Richard wasn't the way I thought Richard was gonna be. I thought it would be like a collaborative thing where I would get to work with my idol, and then it would be like, "This is great." But Richard would come to the set, say his line and leave; it wasn't like a collaborative thing.

**He's not himself—**

Well, Richard doesn't like me. That's what that whole thing was about.

**Have you ever said this before on record?**

No, and I didn't know it until after I did the movie with him. There's this thing where Richard feels that the reason his shit is the way it is because I came along and fucked his shit up. He really believes that in his heart.

**You've done nothing but pay homage to him.**

Yeah, but the only reason he did the movie was he got a big payday out of it, and trust me, the brother does not like me. And I used to have more Richard Pryor pictures up than Elvis Presley. And after I worked with the brother and I found out shit, and you meet people that are around him, know him, and the two camps meet, and people start talking, it's like, Oh, shit. And it's real weird to find out your idol hates you and shit.

**You really think he hates you?**

I don't think he hates me; I just think he thinks I'm the reason why his shit ain't the way it used to be. And I ain't, 'cause I idolize the guy. I found out he used to go to the comedy clubs and I'm going as a student, because in standup comedy, there's few people that I can go and learn from, you know, 'cause he's like a master. You know? Do you think your phones are tapped?

**I think so.**

But you know what, all they want is just to listen, and if my phones are tapped and my house is bugged, they just want to listen and know what you're talking about. They just want to listen: "Where's this motherfucker's head at? What's he planning?"

**FBI: "We don't know where we're gonna have the meeting yet." CIA: "We'll let you know." Who'd you have come in and sweep your house, a surveillance company?**

Yeah.

**And where was the bug?**

I could just be paranoid—who's to say it was the fucking government? It could have been Paramount. I don't know. It could have been anybody. It was one behind this wall—it was voice-activated with a two-mile range on it. I held it in my hand. Then there was one in my bedroom—here's the scary thing.

**In your bedroom? That's just like you're Dr. Martin Luther King.**

I have a joke about that, 'cause I'm working on my standup and I got it in my routine. It's one of those jokes that black people gonna be like—"That's fucked up."

**So your bedroom was bugged?**

Here's the real scary thing. After they took the bug off—24 hours after—it was replaced. They swept the house, took everything down, and they reswept. And it was back up. We had some new people on staff at the time. It could have been a maid, it could have been a florist, it could have been anybody, you know? That was the scary thing.

**That's scary—people you hired, on the FBI, CIA payroll—**

Who's to say what it is? I would get mad when I would read stuff you would say, and think, The brother don't know that I got so much in common with the brother, it's just I gotta have a different agenda because more eyes are on me. And I can potentially get fucked up if I say something. It was like, damn.

**How come we never just talked to each other?**

What they like to do is to separate. You're the biggest black director in the world. Okay, I'm the biggest black movie star in the world. That's a dangerous combination to have us hook up, 'cause the people who have control don't have control then. If *Harlem Nights* had been as good as *The Godfather* it would have still been received bad because it's too much shit—it was like, fuck that, I am directing my shit, I am producing my shit, I am writing and acting and starring—all control was taken away from them.

**I think you got tremendous pressure on you, Eddie. Because every time you open your mouth, people want to laugh. And that's crazy. And they want it to be as funny as the last time I said something.**



**"I met with Brando about three years ago. Just very bizarre. It was at his house. I think he just wanted to look at me and talk with me and see what was up. Warren Beatty did it and Charlton Heston did it. They just want to meet you and pick your brain, look at you, talk to you. What is this strange nigger?"**

Or when you were on *Saturday Night Live* eight years ago. I mean, that shit's very stifling. And they—there's probably a group of people that love my films, but—it's usually industry people—

**You think you're not well-liked amongst Hollywood?**

They don't know me in Hollywood. I don't think I'm disliked. No one knows me. I've done every movie at Paramount, but none of the other studios know me at all. I don't do the Hollywood scene, I don't go to Streisand's house and that kind of shit. When I go to a club, I go to a straight-up club that everybody goes to. So they don't know me in Hollywood, and their thing with me in Hollywood is, What's with this guy and shit? This arrogant young black motherfucker who don't come around, don't do no press. So the press is always on me because I'm inaccessible and they can't figure me out. All of their great ones, the ones they perceive as great, they had meetings with. What happened with Mike Tyson is you get so big people don't understand what happened—how can this motherfucker never lose? With Mike when he lost he became human. And in retrospect, I think doing something like the last two films I've done, maybe it's good that it makes you lose a step. Because what it does now is it makes you human again and the pressure is off you to be this perfect motherfucker again. Because I was always knocking the ball over the fence and I hit a double—my other shit was all home runs. Guys like Mel Gibson, guys like Arnold Schwarzenegger, their movies do what *Harlem Nights* and *48 Hrs.* are doing, all the time. And they're big stars, but I just did one or two pictures like that, and it's like, that's it, he's falling off. But when you do that it takes the pressure off you and it gives you the drive to get your shit back. Because I was probably getting comfortable with my position and I was not appreciating the position I was in. I went through a thing where I had seven pictures back-to-back—hit pictures. And nobody had done that and I think what happened to them was, it was like, What is up with this nigger? I met with Brando about three years ago. Just very bizarre. It was at his house. I think he just wanted to look at me and talk with me and see what was up. Not like, What's the secret or whatever. Just pick my brain. Warren Beatty did it and Charlton Heston did it. They just want to meet you and pick your brain, look at you, talk to you. What is this strange nigger?

**When was the last time you talked to Michael Jackson?**

I talked to Michael about two months ago, three months ago. I mean, I love my brother but that is one strange—I think he had a really normal childhood as far as his family goes—what he did for a living is one thing, but his parents seem like normal people. People are constantly pointing a finger at him, going, "Look how strange he is," but given Michael Jackson's popularity, and given how long he's been in show business, the brother is normal, man. That motherfucker is the most famous—no one can comprehend what it's like to be the most famous person on the face of the earth. That motherfucker is the most famous person on the planet. There's not a place he can go, there's nothing he can do—no one can comprehend what that's like.

**What happened to the alleged "black pack"?**

What black pack?

**I knew you were going to say that.**

That whole thing about the black pack, that was a joke. We were sitting at a press conference and Arsenio said, "Right now there is a resurgence of blacks in Hollywood, and there are a lot of blacks that are doing things; we're here doing our thing now." And as a joke I said, "You know how y'all got your brat pack? We're the black pack," and they got a big laugh. Then it turned into like I was really on a committee. That's a misconception. It's exactly like I said it was: It's camps. And Arsenio is my best friend, but he even got his own camp now. And there's nothing wrong with that, if people aren't opposed to collaborating with each other, 'cause the white boys got their own camps too. Spielberg worked with Lucas, and Ron Howard worked with Spielberg.

**So that we haven't worked together, that's slave mentality, huh?**

It's just in your head and shit. But it's not something that we did as much as—

**But we've got to overcome that.**

What the press did successfully up until now was—because in the public's eye, me and you don't like each other. What they were trying to do was make us not be down, because they don't want that, they don't want something collectively happening. Because there's strength in numbers, and by yourself you can do but so much, by myself I can do but so much. By everybody doing their own thing, you can only get so much accomplished. They would love, love, love for me to do *Beverly Hills Cop 90* and just keep doing it, and then they'd look back at my shit and say, "All Eddie Murphy did was fluff. All he did was bullshit where he took a gun and did the laugh and jumped over a truck and all that bullshit." And they would love for you to do movies of substance—like you do—and make twenty, thirty million dollars a picture, you know? But if you got me, who is capable of getting busy with any actor—I don't think there's an actor in the town who can blow my shit away, and then hooking up with a director who has depth—because when white directors look at me they're not going, like Scorsese and DeNiro, when they get together there's like explosions and shit, you know? But a director like you and an actor like me who have the comic talents that I have and the talents you have in terms of writing and depth and your overall vision, that combination is potentially mindblowing to motherfuckers. They'll let you achieve that little personal shit, because what you've done as a director is something personal, a personal glory. And what I've achieved as a director is something personal. But if we did something that was collaborative and it came off,

that's a greatness, that's historic.

**Well, I'm ready.**

It'd be fucked up if after all this shit we talked about, we do a fucked-up movie. "Remember that SPIN interview? That movie was bullshit."

**I appreciate you letting us do this. I look forward to when we work together. It's gonna be a motherfucker. I know people will come. It'll be good though if we finance the shit ourselves. We won't even go to a studio. We'll show it to each studio and let them bid on it. Don't even go to them for financing. That will really fuck them up. A good distribution rate too, not that 35-percent bullshit. Gross, from dollar one.**

That shit be monumental. See, I'm an entertainer.

**But you got the capital, though.**

I think about performing all the time. There are lots of business ventures I've never gone into because if you go into business you've got to have the head for it, you've got to have some commitment to it, and I don't think I would give a fuck about no theaters, my theater shit would be fucked up.

**When we're on that level, we can just merchandise. That's where the shit really comes when we start controlling shit. We can't really call the shots until we own the theaters, own studios, own banks, own businesses. That's why this whole Korean boycott thing, all that energy that people spent boycotting, it was only about a month ago they said, we'll start our own vegetable stand.**

You know what's real frustrating? You got to keep in mind all the time that they are 50 years ahead of us in terms of what they have planned for us, so you're always fighting uphill. Like the whole Civil Rights Movement, they had black people thinking, Look, some wonderful things came out of the Civil Rights Movement, but there was a downside to the Civil Rights Movement in that the black entrepreneur is gone now, because back then you had black bus companies and black restaurants and black hotels and all that shit. All the black businesses closed right up. And that was calculated. The Civil Rights Movement wasn't about integration, it was about economics, and people think that, Fuck that he's a nigger if his money is green, and they integrated society, and now there's no black entrepreneurs. There's one black business in the *Fortune 500*. That's a fuckin' joke. They're 20 years ahead of us, 50 years ahead of us, thinking like that. That's not just something that happened by chance, that's calculated.

**This is historical, you watch.**

I'll probably get killed for doing this shit. FBI snipers put a bullet in my brain, I'll find out my taxes are fucked up, and I got two dollars left.

**I keep my taxes tight because you can't slip up, man. Just like Marion Barry, man. How you think you can be smoking crack, a black man, and think you ain't gonna get busted for that? A mayor, smoking crack.**

My thing with Marion Barry is I feel bad for the brother and I sympathize with him as a human being, but I can't even go give the brother support. I see a video of you smoking crack, you my brother and all, but you have to face the music. The brother let his guard down—but 'cause you're black you can never let your guard down. And please don't make me look like I'm some kind of Roy Innis in this fucking thing. I've never played devil's advocate about any interviews—

## Marion Barry

continued from page 96

that the mayor of D.C. was a black man, a Democrat, and, quite possibly, a crack addict, only made the new politics and geographical shift of the drug war that much more attractive.

**A**s Marion Barry prepared to run for his fourth term, he was lying to his constituents and lying to himself about his drug use. In October 1989 he told the *Washington Times*, "If you're caught with a half-gram of cocaine, we'll take away your car; if you're caught with one marijuana joint, we'll want your car too. ... If I could have my way about it, I would want the bedroom furniture."

As President Bush launched his drug war, he was fibbing too. Crack was not for sale across the street from the White House. The *Washington Post* reported that White House aides had been forced to order drug enforcement agents to lure a drug dealer named Keith Jackson to the President's preferred point of purchase.

Like the mayor, all the President's men sounded like the hustler at the end of "Living for the City." "Run this across the street for me right quick."

Two blocks away from where Keith Jackson met the undercover agents were the Washington, D.C., headquar-

ters of Capital Bank. Had Abel Holtz been looking out of his office window that day, he probably could have seen an 18-year-old kid succumbing to the temptations of the drug world, accepting \$900 in cash from the undercover agents. Four months later, on January 17, 1990, Keith Jackson was convicted of that drug sale and four other drug charges.

The day after that, Marion Barry met his political doom. The FBI, which spent eight years and several million dollars trying to catch Marion Barry doing something illegal, had set the trap. The bait was Rasheeda Moore. The FBI had offered her money and leniency if she would lure Marion Barry into using drugs in front of a hidden videocamera. She called the mayor and invited him up to her hotel room at the Vista Hotel.

He wanted to meet in the lobby. She insisted. He went up to the room.

Once there, he wanted sex. She proposed drugs. He demurred.

"Not tonight, naw," said Barry.

Rasheeda sent a friend, actually an undercover FBI agent, out to buy crack.

All of Barry's defenses were up, but he couldn't bring himself to believe that the federal government and fate might actually be orchestrating this scene. He wanted to get laid. He smoked the crack.

**W**hen the infamous Vista Hotel videotape was broadcast in June of this year, it seemed that

all of Washington was watching

"What we are witnessing is a subversion of democracy, a subversion of the process of government," Abdul Alim Muhammed, local spokesman for the Nation of Islam and a congressional candidate in Maryland, told a pro-Barry rally.

Whites scoffed and said there was no evidence for such a belief. George Will, the syndicated columnist, scorned the "conspiracy mongers" among Barry supporters and lamented "a pattern of dereliction among prominent black leaders."

The mayor's supporters, had they known the history of the drug war, might have lamented a pattern of dereliction among prominent white leaders. But who in Washington knew the reality of Miami? The forging of Abel Holtz or the comedy of LeoMar Avenue, the secret of "Cocaine Plum," the CIA connection that saved a major drug dealer from prosecution, or the story of the cocaine kingpin who received Christmas cards from George Bush. Blacks and whites alike didn't know these stories because white drug policymakers and the white-dominated national media did not regard them as important aspects of the nation's drug problem.

Sensing something amiss, many of the mayor's supporters blamed a racial "conspiracy," a combination of, in this case, white persons for illegal or evil

purpose. But this combination of persons was not some sinister cabal of racists operating outside the law. It was a combination of respectable, mostly white, U.S. government officials (their actions reported by a mostly deferential press corps) who simply pursued "policy": a course of action adopted as advantageous or expedient.

The Barry affair was not the work of white conspiracy nor solely the fault of Marion Barry's crack-addled soul. It was the result of national drug policy.

**B**ack in the hotel room, Rasheeda Moore asked Marion Barry if he wanted one more hit on the pipe. Barry said no: "Let's go downstairs." Then the FBI agents burst in the door, shouting, "You're under arrest."

Keith Jackson, the kid who sold crack to the President, was heading for twelve years in prison without possibility of parole, two years longer than the boy in the song: "A jury of your peers having found you guilty: Ten years."

Abel Holtz was tending his financial empire from an office high above Brickell Avenue in downtown Miami.

And Stevie Wonder was singing that final sad chorus: "Living just enough, living just enough."

Marion Barry was under arrest and the first thing he said was, "That was a good set-up, wasn't it?"

"... for the city!"

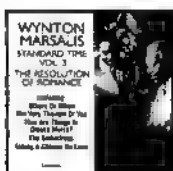
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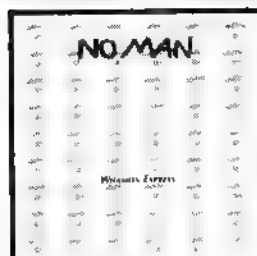
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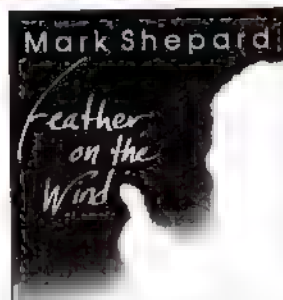
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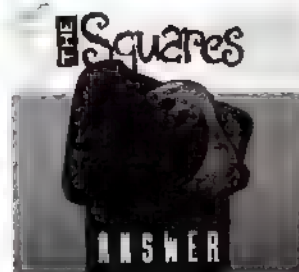
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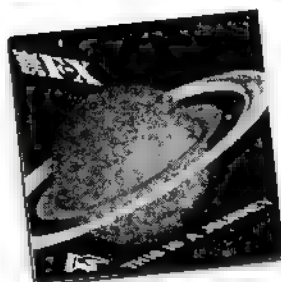
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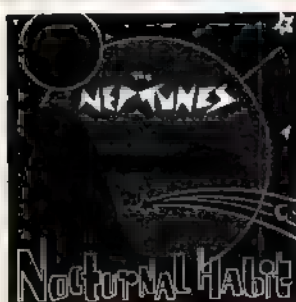
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# THE PERILS OF GUESTING

SPIN's reporter at large, DEAN CHRISTOPHER, wonders, "What if this guest-editor bit gets carried away—and moves into the civilian sector?"

Once again SPIN has stunned the journalism community with an unprecedented move—handing over the editorship of this magazine to an outsider. Moviemaker Spike Lee was in total control of this issue, as you already know unless you read magazines from the back to the front. Our commitment to Spike reflects our devout belief in freedom of expression.

Because it takes a real set of plums to let a non-journalist play air guitar with a national publication. Editorship is a highly specific skill. Talent—even genius—in another field doesn't necessarily guarantee competence in bolting together a 106-page magazine.

Still, there was the mixed thrill of uncertainty. How'd you like your 747 guest-landed by Diana Ross? Your appendix guest-removed by Sir John Gielgud? Your best pal guest-fondled by Capitol Records' Promotion Department? Our own Bob Guccione, Jr. is a terrific writer (and an outstanding chef), but I keep refusing to let him drill my teeth, despite his persistent longing for a secondary career in dentistry.

It takes courage to try something new, particularly in public. So much could go wrong. And it was doubly risky to entrust the awesome power of the press to someone who knew he was there for only one issue. He wasn't likely to be too worried about ongoing relations with readers, advertisers, or subordinates. So he could just smash things and leave if he wanted to—like farting with one foot already in the stirrup.

This is what caused night sweats for some fainthearted friends of SPIN. They mewled things like, "What if Spike goes frothy and devotes the entire issue to an in-depth study of Matt the Hoople? What if he espouses some unpopular cause, like calling for the death of North Dakota?"

Prince's purple reign.



"Well," we said, "what if he does?" We were betting that anything Spike came up with would be useful to the readers. My own nightmare would be SPIN's future in the hands of people like Richard Nixon or censorship czar du jour Jack Thompson, because then we'd likely end up with mind-pap like:

**Kool-Aid**

**Silent Rock**

**Toward an All-Label Future**

**Celibate Marriages**

**SPIN Goes to a Square Dance**

**Insider Trading and Pollution are Good for You!**

**New Satanic Threat?**

**Young Republicans' Latest Prom Thrill!**

**Editorial**

**They Really Work!**

**Photo Essay**

**Advocacy Journalism**



Julio Iglesias does field research for *American Farmer*.

No, we believe that SPIN's "guesting" gambit, despite the risk, has resulted in a provocative, meaningful issue. Of course, other magazines will follow our example. Many may actually fire their permanent editors and adopt an all-guest format. Could 1991 bring us excitement like the following?

## Magazine

**Reader's Digest**

**Boys' Life**

**New England Journal of Medicine**

**Bride's**

**Container News**

**American Farmer**

**Spankers' Monthly**

**Scientific American**

## Guest Editor

**Biz Markie**

**Michael Jackson**

**M.C. Hammer**

**Tom Waits**

**Barry Manilow**

**Julio Iglesias**

**Rev. Donald Wildmon**

**Arsenio Hall**



Director Hulk Hogan walks *Amadeus* through a scene.

Guesting might provide a refreshing change for governments:

## Country

**Estonia**

**Argentina**

**Zimbabwe**

**Liberia**

**Tristan da Cunha**

**People's Republic of China**

**France**

**United Kingdom**

## Guest Ruler

**The Dave Clark Five**

**Young MC**

**Ed Begley, Jr.**

**Arnold Palmer**

**Prince**

**George Bush**

**Jerry Lewis**

**Jerry Lee Lewis**

Hollywood will swiftly follow suit with:

## Movie

**Rambo IV**

**Amadeus II**

**Oklahoma Drill Bit Massacre**

**Ghost Dad II**

**Becket II**

## Guest Director

**Jody Watley**

**Hulk Hogan**

**Jesse Helms**

**Mario Cuomo**

**Paula Abdul**

Guesting will eventually trickle down to the personal level. Look for:

**Guest inmates** at prisons (including executions!)—as expendable underclasses sub for White Collar Wealthies.

**Guest decorators**—someone you've never met will unexpectedly create an expensive new environment for you. It's like a blind date with the Taste Fairy, and it's so-o-o-o exciting!

**Guest victims**—because even criminals get tired of the same old faces!

Well, I could go on and on, but I'm running off to an experimental guest-husbanding for an avid, lonely wife in a nearby town. So this article will now be guest-finished by Tipper Gore. Tip? Tip? Funny, she was here a minute ago.



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